GENDER AND POWER IN INDONESIAN ISLAM

Leaders, feminists, Sufis and *pesantren* selves

Edited by Bianca J. Smith and Mark Woodward

ROUTLEDGE

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Gender and Power in Indonesian Islam

The traditional Islamic boarding schools known as *pesantren* are crucial centres of Muslim learning and culture within Indonesia, but their cultural significance has been underexplored. This book is the first to explore understandings of gender and Islam in *pesantren* and the Sufi orders attached to them in Indonesia. By considering these distinct but related Muslim gender cultures in Java, Lombok and Aceh, the book examines the broader function of *pesantren* as a force for both redefining existing modes of Muslim subjectivity and cultivating new ones. It demonstrates how, as Muslim women rise to positions of power and authority in this patriarchal domain, they challenge and negotiate 'normative' Muslim patriarchy while establishing their own Muslim 'authenticity'. The book goes on to question the comparison of Indonesian Islam with the Arab Middle East, challenging the adoption of expatriate and diasporic Middle Eastern Muslim feminist discourses and secular western feminist analyses in Indonesian contexts. Based on extensive fieldwork, the book explores configurations of female leadership, power, feminisms and sexuality to reveal multiple Muslim selves in *pesantren* and Sufi orders, not only as centres of learning, but also as social spaces in which the interplay of gender, politics, status, power and piety shape the course of life.

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Edited by
Bianca J. Smith and Mark Woodward

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Contents

Series editor's foreword ix
Acknowledgements x
Notes on contributors xi

Introduction: de-colonizing Islam and Muslim feminism 1
BIANCA J. SMITH AND MARK WOODWARD

PART I
Female leadership and Muslim agency **23**

1 Between Sufi and Salafi subjects: female leadership, spiritual power and gender matters in Lombok 25
BIANCA J. SMITH AND SAIPUL HAMDI

2 Leadership and authority: women leading *dayah* in Aceh 49
ASNA HUSIN

3 Gender in contemporary Acehnese *dayah*: moving beyond docile agency? 66
EKA SRIMULYANI

PART II
Female spiritual authority in Sufi orders and mystical groups **81**

4 When *wahyu* comes through women: female spiritual authority and divine revelation in mystical groups and *pesantren*-Sufi orders 83
BIANCA J. SMITH

5 Reframing the gendered dimension of Islamic spirituality: *silsilah* and the 'problem' of female leadership in *tarekat* 103
ASFA WIDIYANTO

PART III
Muslim feminisms: Islamic and Islamist orientations **117**

6 Interpreting and enacting Islamic feminism in Pesantren Al-Muayyad Windan 119
SAIPUL HAMDI

7 Women's negotiation of status and space in a Muslim fundamentalist movement 135
INAYAH ROHMANIYAH

PART IV
Sexuality, *shari'ah* and power **155**

8 The tawdry tale of 'Syech' Puji and Luftiana: child marriage and polygamy on the boundary of the *pesantren* world 157
MARK WOODWARD AND INAYAH ROHMANIYAH

9 Constructing sexuality in a panopticon *pesantren* 175
MUSTAGHFIROH RAHAYU

Glossary 187
Index 190

Series editor's foreword

The contributions of women to the social, political and economic transformations occurring in the Asian region are legion. Women have served as leaders of nations, communities, workplaces, activist groups and families. Asian women have joined with others to participate in fomenting change at micro and macro levels. They have been both agents and targets of national and international interventions in social policy. In the performance of these myriad roles women have forged new and modern gendered identities that are recognizably global and local. Their experiences are rich, diverse and instructive. The books in this series testify to the central role women play in creating the new Asia and re-creating Asian womanhood. Moreover, these books reveal the resilience and inventiveness of women around the Asian region in the face of entrenched and evolving patriarchal social norms.

Scholars publishing in this series demonstrate a commitment to promoting the productive conversation between Gender Studies and Asian Studies. The need to understand the diversity of experiences of femininity and womanhood around the world increases inexorably as globalization proceeds apace. Lessons from the experiences of Asian women present us with fresh opportunities for building new possibilities for women's progress the world over.

The Asian Studies Association of Australia (ASAA) sponsors this publication series as part of its ongoing commitment to promoting knowledge about women in Asia. In particular, the ASAA Women's Forum provides the intellectual vigour and enthusiasm that maintains the Women in Asia Series (WIAS). The aim of the series, since its inception in 1990, is to promote knowledge about women in Asia to both academic and general audiences. To this end, WIAS books draw on a wide range of disciplines, including anthropology, sociology, political science, cultural studies, media studies, literature, and history. The series prides itself on being an outlet for cutting-edge research conducted by recent PhD graduates and postdoctoral fellows from throughout the region.

The Series could not function without the generous professional advice provided by many anonymous readers. Moreover, the wise counsel provided by Peter Sowden at Routledge is invaluable. WIAS, its authors and the ASAA are very grateful to these people for their expert work.

Lenore Lyons, Series Editor
(University of Sydney)

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This book is the product of ethnographic fieldwork that we, and the authors in this volume, have conducted individually and together from 2005 to 2012. The idea for an edited volume grew out of Smith's research on female leadership in *pesantren*, mystical groups and Sufi orders in Java and Lombok, which, combined with Woodward's expertise on Islam in Java, has materialized in the present volume. The visibility of Indonesian Muslim women and men writing about *pesantren* and gender issues in Bahasa Indonesia also pushed us to start working on this first ever volume in English that explores gender and women in the *pesantren* world.

It was not easy soliciting chapters on a topic that very little has been written about in English, partly because of the difficulty foreign researchers have accessing *pesantren* worlds. We wanted to include as many Indonesian scholars as possible, and many who we wanted to include unfortunately could not commit because English is a barrier for them. Thank you to our contributors for embarking on this project with us, most of whom are feminist products of the *pesantren* worlds we present in this volume and *pesantren* selves in the very best sense of the term.

It would not have been possible to write this book without having access to extensive networks of Indonesian scholars who work in the field of *pesantren* studies. We would like to kindly thank our colleagues at Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University Yogyakarta and Gadjah Mada University for their support over the years. Very special warm thanks must also be extended to our series editor Lenore Lyons, to Linell Cady and Carolyn Forbes from Arizona State University, USA and to Sue Blackburn and Stuart Robson from Monash University, Australia.

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Introduction

De-colonizing Islam and Muslim feminism

Bianca J. Smith and Mark Woodward

> In love, nothing exists between breast and Breast.
> Speech is born out of longing,
> True description from the real taste.
> The one who tastes, knows;
> the one who explains, lies.
> How can you describe the true form of Something
> In whose presence you are blotted out?
> And in whose being you still exist?
> And who lives as a sign for your journey?
>
> Rabi'ah Al-Adawiyah (717–801 CE)
> (Upton 1988)

This book is about Islam, female leadership, Sufism, power, sexuality and feminist praxis in the world's most populous Muslim society – Indonesia. Analysis of the roles women play in one institution, the *pesantren* (a traditional Islamic boarding school for the study of the Qur'an, Hadith and other classical Islamic texts) and the ways in which it shapes their lives and identities is the heart of this volume. Each chapter explores some combination of these topics in one or more *pesantren* and/or the ways in which what we call '*pesantren* selves' shape other institutions and discourse systems.

By calling attention to the importance of gender in *pesantren* culture, we also seek to advance a larger effort to de-colonize the anthropology of Islam and Muslim feminism in Indonesia. The chapters in this collection emerge out of post-colonial debates about feminism and Islam, particularly those articulated by the feminist anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod (2001). In response to Edward Said's (1978) seminal post-colonial work, *Orientalism*, Abu-Lughod (2001: 101) stated that it 'was not meant to be a work of feminist scholarship or theory. Yet it has engendered feminist scholarship and debate in Middle East studies as well as far beyond.' Regrettably, the dichotomization of the Arab East and the West and the flourishing of Arab feminism at the intersection of the two has established the hegemony of Middle Eastern (and South Asian) voices in feminist studies of Islam. Arab

feminisms, like Arab Islam, have been judged to be the authentic ones. Essentializing Islamic feminism along Arab, South Asian (diasporic) or Western lines threatens to form yet another hegemonic discourse. This raises concerns about women's marginalization of other women, in particular that of Muslim women by Muslim women.

The authors in this collection attempt to confront this hegemony by deconstructing categories that deny the authenticity of Indonesian Islams and those that enable the confusion of Arab, South Asian and Muslim feminisms. We consider the applicability of Western and Middle Eastern feminist theory to Indonesian cases. *Pesantren* and *pesantren*-based Muslim feminisms cannot be understood in isolation from the social, political and religious systems of which they are components. Similarly, the lives of the people who teach, learn and live in them are shaped, but not determined, by feminism and the *pesantren* experience.

This volume illustrates a diversity of feminist voices in Indonesia that remain largely unknown for three reasons: The first is that Indonesian scholars are less inclined to write in English than their Arab and South Asian counterparts (Blackburn *et al*. 2008). This is a legacy of Dutch colonialism. English has not been naturalized to nearly the extent that it has in former British colonies. The second is that many Indonesian feminists are more concerned with praxis than academic discourse. The third is that the Arab-centrism of Islamic studies and Western perspectives on Islam more generally, make it possible for Western feminists to ignore non-Arab Muslim discourse with impunity. Further, Western and European female anthropologists' misreadings of non-scripturalist Islam as nominal in Indonesia prior to the 1990s contributed to the under-representation of Muslim women in scholarship on Islam and Indonesia, following typologies and paradigms established decades earlier by male scholars in the colonial and post-colonial literature (Smith 2008).

The *pesantren* and feminist thought and practice emerging from it are not well known except to a small community of specialists. One of our purposes in this volume is to work towards rectifying this situation. Our point is not simply that there are Indonesian examples or cases worthy of consideration, but also that the pervasive Arab-centrism of the academic study of Islam has led to the marginalization of Indonesian (and Southeast Asian) Islams and Muslim feminisms. This marginalization is the product of a colonial Orientalist discourse that views the Islams of the region as inauthentic because they differ from those of the Arab heartland. Here, the tropes of Western colonialism merge with the discourse of a new Wahhabi, and especially Saudi Arabian, cultural and religious colonialism that also views Indonesian and Southeast Asian Islams as inauthentic and confounds Islam with Arab culture. This is a double-edged sword because it allows scholars primarily concerned with Islam to ignore Southeast Asia, and Southeast Asianists to ignore Islam. This means that in the burgeoning literature on women and/in Islam, Indonesian and other Southeast Asian Muslim women are marginalized.

There is a solid line of Western-derived discourse on Indonesian Islam that began during the Dutch colonial period, continuing into the present,

much of which focuses on the analysis of Javanese and Malay language religious texts (Drewes 1969; Florida 2000; Ricklefs 2006; Soebardi 1975). Yet, at least until recently, Islam has been less than fully visible in scholarship concerning Indonesian cultures and social life. Here, dominant paradigms rooted in Arab-centric perspectives on Islam minimize its impact on Indonesia. This view, which owes much to an alternative variant of Anglo-Dutch Orientalism and is forcefully articulated in the writing of Clifford Geertz (1960), led generations of ethnographers to neglect the study of Islam in the constitution of Indonesian personal and collective identities (Woodward 2010).

Arab-centric perspectives on Islam in Indonesia further explain the lack of feminist inquiry into *pesantren* and Sufi orders affiliated with them. Until recently there has been relatively little scholarship on women and gender in *pesantren* and almost none on Sufism. This is also in part because *pesantren* and Sufi orders are patriarchal institutions that offer little space for women in public contexts. Zamakhsyari Dhofier's (1999) study of the *pesantren* tradition in East Java provides a framework for understanding *pesantren* culture and especially the central role of the *kyai* (male Muslim leader) in its social structure. *Kyai* are charismatic Muslim leaders and scholars whose status within the *pesantren* is much like that of the king in a traditional Javanese state. The work by Saipul Hamdi, Asna Husin, Bianca J. Smith and Eka Srimulyani (in this volume) complements Dhofier's by providing insight into the gendered aspects of *pesantren* and shows the important role women play in the reproduction of *pesantren* culture. Their work parallels that of other feminist scholars whose research on Middle Eastern and South Asian cultures describes Muslim women in leadership positions and the strategies they employ for resisting and negotiating with male dominance. Our focus on *pesantren* in this volume moves beyond the existing literature. Chapters by Mustaghfiroh Rahayu and Inayah Rohmaniyah include accounts of new forms of organization and study of Islam, including *pesantren* that are residential facilities for university students and others rooted in Salafi or Wahhabi teachings as well as traditional boarding schools. Chapters about Aceh and Lombok reveal the role of non-Javanese cultures in forming *pesantren* selves and lifestyles.

By engaging with Arab and South Asian Muslim feminisms, we bring Indonesia into a transcultural debate about Islamic feminism. Indonesian Muslim women have been marginalized in these debates by tendencies to essentialize Muslim women in terms of Arab or South Asian women's experience. Indonesian discourse on women and Islam differs from the Arab and South Asian varieties, due to cultural and political differences. In Southeast Asia human rights abuses and atrocities such as honour killings, dowry murder, female genital mutilation and public stoning are not practised.

Feminist anthropologists have shown that bilateral kinship systems common in Southeast Asia afford women levels of social autonomy, economic agency and access to inheritance and land unknown in the Middle East (see

Errington 1990; Firth 1995; Karim 1995). These systems also contribute to the establishment of complementarities that value both male and female. This is not to suggest that Indonesian women are free from abuses that follow patriarchy, but that the stereotyped array of abuses and violent practices associated with Islam in other places are not present in Southeast Asia. This problematizes the assumption that Islam is the source of such abuse. It challenges Arab and South Asian Muslim feminists to further consider the cultural roots of patriarchal practice.

The *pesantren* tradition: history, structure and gender

Pesantren are traditional Javanese Islamic boarding schools. In most respects they are similar to the *madrasah* of the Middle East and South Asia. They are also known as *pondok* or *pondok pesantren* (often abbreviated *ponpes*). There are similar schools in other parts of Indonesia and throughout Muslim Southeast Asia. In Aceh they are called *dayah*. In Minangkabau areas of Sumatra they are known as *surau* and in Malaysia, the southern Philippines and southern Thailand as *pondok* (Liow 2009; Hamid 2010; Woodward and Yayah 2009). In other parts of Indonesia, including in Lombok, Sumbawa, Bali and Kalimantan, they are referred to as *pesantren* and/or *madrasah*. Throughout the region they are centres of Muslim education and culture. In Indonesia, the term *santri* is used to refer to observant Muslims in a general sense, but its core meaning is Muslim student. *Pesantren* means 'a place for *santri*.' *Pondok* is a Javanese/Indonesia/Malay/Arabic word meaning 'hostel'. In Malay and some dialects of Indonesian, the word *pondok* can also mean 'hut'.

There are at least 220 million Indonesian Muslims, more than three times the total number of Egyptians, and more than ten times the number of Saudi Arabians. There are at least 16,000 *pesantren*. Just as Indonesia is the world's most populous Muslim country, the *pesantren* system is the largest Muslim educational network. When one considers the fact that there are similar schools in neighbouring countries with closely related religious and cultural traditions, the figures are even larger. Most *pesantren* are located in rural areas, though there are thousands in urban areas.

Abdurrahman Wahid (1974: 40–47) has described the *pesantren* system as the core of a Javanese subculture. This volume expands on his observation in two ways. It moves the discussion beyond Java, and, to a lesser extent, beyond Indonesia. It also focuses on gender and the construction of gendered *pesantren* selves. This self is both a collective and private one that integrates *pesantren* and non-*pesantren* life as a Muslim design, constructed in the contexts of modernities, political Islam and culture. We can think of a '*pesantren* self' in two ways. One is a collective representation of modes of social action typical of *pesantren*. More complex notions of self-subjectivity and agency emerge as *pesantren* people interact with the larger society. The deployment of the *pesantren* self in social interaction is complex. The border between private senses of self- and public representation is blurred. Interlocutors do not

always recognize *pesantren* selves. An example is that of women who do not cover their hair, but dress modestly. On the other hand, those who have constructed *pesantren* selves are often capable of recognizing *pesantren* others through subtle behavioural clues others miss. *Pesantren* people can also recognize others who are non-*pesantren*-oriented.

Pesantren selves emerge from social interaction as well as from the study of Islamic texts and communal religious practice. Some *pesantren* are culturally conservative concerning gender issues, reproducing traditional patriarchal structures and patriarchal *pesantren* selves. Others cultivate new Muslim subjectivities and are used by Muslims concerned about gender justice and equality to transform culture and society. These lead to the construction of implicitly or explicitly feminist *pesantren* selves. The chapters in this book explore configurations of female leadership, power, *pesantren* feminisms and sexuality to reveal multiple Muslim selves in the context of *pesantren* and Sufi orders, not only as centres of learning, but also as social spaces in which the interplay of gender, politics, status, power and piety shape the course of life.

The majority of *pesantren* are affiliated with Indonesia's largest Islamic organization Nahdlatul Ulama (founded in 1926). Many Sufi orders (*tarekat*) are also attached to *pesantren*. The Nahdlatul Ulama organization has approximately 80 million members and followers. Indonesian (and Southeast Asian) Islam is almost exclusively Sunni and the Syafi'i school of law (*mazhab*) is nearly universal, except among groups such as Muhammadiyah (the second largest Islamic organization, founded in 1912, with approximately 40 million members) that are derived from nineteenth-century Egyptian reform movements based on the proposition that the Qur'an and Hadith are the only authoritative sources for Muslim jurisprudence. Prior to the twentieth century, Sufism was a dominant element in Southeast Asian Islamic thought and ritual practice (Ricklefs 2006; Woodward 1989). The rise of modernist or reformist Islams in the early decades of the twentieth century led to sharp debates concerning both mystical understandings of Islam and local modes of ritual and devotional practice.

The origins and early history of the *pesantren* tradition are obscure. There are few sources on Muslim education in Java and elsewhere in Southeast Asia predating the nineteenth century. Martin Van Bruinessen (1994a) has suggested that the *pesantren* system, as we now know it, developed in the nineteenth century. Prior to that time mosques, royal courts and the homes of religious teachers were the primary loci of Islamic education. The oldest documented *pesantren* were established in the mid-eighteenth century. The first Dutch study of education in Java, conducted in 1819, indicated the presence of organized Muslim schools only in a few centres in Java, especially Madiun and Ponorogo (Van der Chijs 1864).

Pesantren residential patterns and the physical location of Muslim scholarship in Javanese cities may offer insight into the sociological development of the *pesantren* system. In Yogyakarta, Kudus and other old centres of Islamic learning, there are *kyai* who do not have *pesantren* but teach (*ngaji*) in their

homes or in mosques. These houses often contain a prayer room (*musholla*) and a single large classroom that can accommodate as many as fifty *santri*. These establishments are found in the *kauman* (neighbourhoods populated by *ulama* and other *santri* families found in older Indonesian cities) located in the vicinity of the cities' principle mosque. They can also be found in the vicinity of mosques established and controlled by the Sultanate in strategic locations throughout its territory. Some of these, especially in Mlangi near Yogyakarta, have developed into small *pesantren*.

Oral tradition in *pesantren* in East and Central Java maintains that the schools were originally centred around the *kyai*'s house and mosque. *Santri* who came to study under a *kyai*'s tutelage built small *pondok* large enough for one or, at the most, two students. This tradition is preserved in Patani in South Thailand, where there are schools with several hundred modern versions each housing a single student, and in Aceh, where every *santri* is required to build her or his own hut at some schools. Students are required to live in these *pondok* to encourage study and discourage frivolous socializing.

Some *pesantren* have only a handful of students. One of the largest, Pondok Pesantren Lirboyo in Kediri in East Java, has more than 10,000. *Pesantren s*tudents are as young as 4 or 5 years of age. There is no upper age limit and many *pesantren* also cater to university students and adults. In many traditional *pesantren* there are no admission standards, no formal classes and no examinations or grades, at least in religious subjects. Students study particular texts under the tutelage of a *kyai* until they have mastered and, in many instances, memorized them. *Pesantren* education is rooted in the textual traditions of Sunni Islam, and at the same time the oral transmission of textual knowledge and wisdom lies close to the heart of *pesantren* culture. Typically a *kyai* reads from a text and comments on its meaning and on fine points of Arabic grammar. When he decides that a *santri* has mastered a particular text, the *kyai* confers certification (*ijazah*), allowing the student to teach it, and transmit the wisdom associated with it, to the next generation. The core texts are in Arabic, though some were written by scholars from Southeast Asia. There is also a long history of writing commentaries in both Javanese and Malay.

Every *pesantren* is unique. The Islamic texts pupils study and the devotional practices they are required to observe vary considerably, reflecting the learning religious orientation and practices of the *kyai*. Curricula vary greatly but usually include some combination of classical Arabic grammar, Qur'anic studies – including memorization, recitation and exegesis, Islamic law, theology and mysticism. These texts are known collectively as *kitab kuning* ('yellow books'; classical Islamic texts) because of the colour of the paper they are printed on. Some are written by Indonesian and other Southeast Asian scholars; others are reprints of works published in Cairo and Beirut (Van Bruinessen 1994a).

One of the most basic, and most widely studied, of the *kitab kuning* is *Alfiyah ibn Malik fi Annahwi wa Asshorfi*, a poetic work on Arabic grammar

by the Spanish scholar Ibnu Malik (1204–74). It is studied throughout Indonesia and in Malaysia and South Thailand. It is regarded as being the key to higher Islamic learning. In addition to providing examples of complex grammatical principles essential for understanding other *kitab*, it also makes theological points about the nature of faith (*iman*) and intercession (*wasilah*). Memorization also has tangible rewards. It is widely believed that *santri* who accomplish this task will find wealth, a beautiful wife, or both. Legal texts (*fiqh*) are the most widely studied. They provide guidance for living a proper Muslim life in both the ritual and social senses of the term. Ritual performance is among the major topics considered in *fiqh* texts. Guidance on how to perform purification rites, obligatory and supererogatory prayers and fasts are among the frequently discussed topics. Social relations are another important concern. Marriage and the regulation of sexuality are important topics. Works on manners and comportment (*adab*) are also important. They are among the most important sources for the constitution of hierarchy and patriarchy in the *pesantren* world. Many of these texts emphasize the teacher–student relationship. One of these texts, *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, is widely known not only in Southeast Asia, but throughout the Sunni Muslim world and is available in English translation (Von Grunebaum 1947). Others that figure significantly in the education of female *santri* concern domestic relationships and are intended to prepare adolescent girls for future roles as pious and deferential wives and mothers able to transmit core *pesantren* values to young children. There are similar texts on domestic relations addressed to male *santri*.

In general, studying *kitab kuning* under the guidance of a *kyai* is believed to be a source of understanding and blessing as well as knowledge. This is one of the factors distinguishing *pesantren* education from that attainable at secular and even Islamic schools and universities. There are three basic teaching methods, two of which emphasize the oral transmission of knowledge and a third which provides experience in reaching collective decisions in accordance with the principle of consensus (*ijma*) that is one of the four recognized sources of Islamic law, the others being the Qur'an, Prophetic tradition (*sunnah*) and analogy. The *bandongan* or *weton* method is the most basic form of instruction. When teaching in this mode, the *kyai* reads from the text one word at a time, commenting on grammatical and semantic points that are essential for *santri* to understand. *Santri* make copious notes on their own copies of the text. It is in this way that oral tradition is preserved in written form. For the most advanced *santri* who have mastered Arabic grammar, that is the language of instruction.

In most cases, the *kyai* reads the text in Arabic and makes comments in the appropriate local language. Many Javanese *kyai* insist that Indonesian and Malay do not have sufficiently rich vocabularies to explain the complexities of legal and theological works. Not surprisingly, Malay scholars strongly disagree. Some *kyai* have begun to use Indonesian because *santri* come from increasingly diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds and some of today's

Javanese *santri* cannot speak Javanese fluently. Most *kyai* continue to insist that instruction begin with the Arabic original and that published Indonesian translations of *kitab kuning* are not reliable. Patani in South Thailand provides an important exception to this general rule. There, *Kitab Jawi*, Malay language texts written in Arabic script, are held in great esteem. One *pondok* teacher Woodward interviewed in 2008 adamantly insisted that *Kitab Jawi* are as authoritative as Arabic language legal and theological texts.

Sorogan is an instructional method through which *santri* learn to read or recite texts correctly. It emphasizes pronunciation. Depending on the context in which this method is used, it can be more advanced or more basic than *bandongan.* In advanced classes in *pesantren*, *santri* who have acquired basic knowledge of a text read it to the *kyai*, who corrects mistakes. *Mushawarah*, or discussion, is the method through which *santri* learn to arrive at consensus concerning solutions to *fiqh* questions. The *kyai* poses a question and either guides *santri* through the processes of arriving at a consensus or leaves them to their own devices and evaluates their efforts.

Every *pesantren* has its own set of collective devotions (*mujahadah*), in addition to those required by *shari'ah*. These generally include recitation of particular portions of Qur'an (especially *Surah Yasin*), supererogatory prayers and fasting, recitation of litanies or of selected Qur'anic/Arabic texts and Arabic devotional poetry. Visiting the graves of the *kyai*'s ancestors is often held to be obligatory. Some, but not all, *pesantren* are affiliated with Sufi mystical orders.

Prior to Indonesian independence from the Netherlands in 1945, they were the only educational institutions available to the majority of the population. Until the late 1970s and early 1980s, many *pesantren* taught only religious subjects. But as secular education has become increasingly important, most have introduced non-Islamic or general subjects. The modernization of the *pesantren* education system had already begun in the 1930s. Pesantren Tebuireng was founded in 1899 by Kyai Hasyim Asy'ari (1871–1947). Asy'ari was one of the founders of Nahdlatul Ulama and is widely regarded as having been one of the most important Indonesian Muslim scholars of the twentieth century, and as a Sufi saint. He introduced instruction in secular subjects in 1929. Many other *pesantren* soon followed his lead, though a lack of qualified teachers hampered the reform process.

Educational modernization accelerated after Indonesian independence and especially after 1975, when the Indonesian government mandated six years of general education for all students and offered subsidies to *pesantren* that chose to offer a secular curriculum (Lukens-Bull 2005). There were, however, provisions for *pesantren* to offer an entirely religious curriculum. Some chose this option, but a combination of secular and Islamic education became the norm. Many *pesantren* now include *madrasah*, which often overshadow programmes offering traditional religious education. Many offer middle and high school programmes that are the equivalent of those available in government schools. Some offer vocational training as well. The 1975 reforms also enabled

pesantren graduates to take college entrance examinations. A few *pesantren* now offer a mixed curriculum at the college level.

Pesantren were originally exclusively male institutions. Prior to Indonesian independence educational opportunities for girls and women were extremely limited. Girls from elite families received some education from male teachers who visited their parents' homes. There was, however, a strong bias against female education and even literacy. In Yogyakarta, for example, it was widely believed that it was dangerous to teach girls to read and write, because they might be tempted to send love notes to boys. While some *pesantren* began to admit female students as early as the 1930s, until the 1960s there were few, if any, female students in most *pesantren*. The emergence of exclusively female *pesantren* and the inclusion of girls in formerly single sex schools has paralleled the more general increase in educational opportunities for girls and women in independent Indonesia. Today, some *pesantren* have separate facilities for female students, while others are fully coeducational. There are an increasing number of female teachers in mixed gender *pesantren*. In some, women now hold formal leadership positions. Smith and Hamdi's chapter provides interesting material on girls' Islamic education with the establishment of the first all-girls' *madrasah* in 1943 in Lombok and the controversial rise to leadership by the founding father's daughter.

A more recent development is that *pesantren* are now being utilized as residential facilities for students at Islamic and secular secondary schools and universities. They offer *pesantren*-style discipline and emphasis on religious practice for both male and female students seeking secular educations. Some also mandate the traditional *pesantren* curriculum. Many parents from *pesantren* backgrounds prefer their children to live in these *pesantren* while they are studying away from home, because they offer safe religious and cultural environments. Most of these *pesantren* are single gender facilities. Rahayu's chapter presents an account of one of these new *pesantren* in the context of the regulation of sexuality among female *santri*. In that respect this new *pesantren* style builds on an existing tradition because residential quarters in *pesantren* are almost always gender segregated. Residential spaces for female students in traditional *pesantren* are often very strictly regulated. At Pesantren Lirboyo, for example, female *santri* live in a walled compound with only a single entrance. Fathers, brothers and teachers are the only males allowed through the gate. In others, there are residential quarters (*pondok*) only for female students.

Kyai and *nyai* leadership in *pesantren* culture

A central theme that runs throughout this volume concerns that of particular Muslim female individuals (especially *nyai*, the wives or daughters of *kyai*) assuming leadership roles in *pesantren* and Sufi orders; some based on kinship practices that enable the inheritance of spiritual power, and others not. According to normative/conservative interpretations of the Qur'an, Hadith

and *fiqh* (especially Syafi'i law), men are leaders of women. It is this decree that causes debate among Muslims, who interpret it to mean that women may not be leaders of a nation, mixed gender prayers or a criminal court, but may lead social organizations and community groups. Muslims against women in leadership positions refer to the Qur'anic decree, along with Hadith, which tell of a nation's demise if led by a woman, and also to *fiqh*, which combined reinforce the decree of male authority (Van Doorn-Harder 2002; Van Wichelen 2010). When viewed alongside other Qur'anic decrees, such as that men and women are equal before Allah, the debate broadens and becomes ambiguous (see Hamdi, this volume; Wadud 1999). The force of these debates was revealed when Megawati Sukarnoputri became the first female president of Indonesia (see Van Doorn-Harder 2002; Van Wichelen 2010 for more detail) and illuminated marked divisions between secular feminists, Muslim and Islamic feminists and Islamists.

The issue of female leadership in Southeast Asia needs to be couched in the wider context of elite rule, patrimony and the family (Richter 1990–91; Thompson 2002–3) in order to understand that women who rise to power do so because of political kinship (inheritance of political power), and not gender; many powerful women in influential or leadership positions do not necessarily possess a feminist agenda (Blackburn 2010). This has implications for discussions of female agency and feminism in a contested arena, especially as they relate to Islam, where the issue of female agency has long coloured feminist debates about women's rights in Western and non-Western contexts. Islamic feminist fundamentalists, female suicide bombers and docile agents demonstrate that Muslim, Islamic and Islamist feminism embodies different meanings to the liberal, emancipatory projects of European and Western feminisms (Mahmood 2005). Chapters by Widiyanto, Smith and Hamdi, Srimulyani and Husin reveal contestations surrounding female leadership and authority in *pesantren* and Sufi orders indicating that unambiguous female leadership remains problematic.

Traditional *pesantren* are patriarchal. *Kyai*, as Muslim scholars and leaders, are at the centre of the *pesantren*, not only for their understanding of Islamic texts, but also for their spiritual qualities. This is especially true of those affiliated with Sufi orders. The image of the *nyai*, the wife or daughter of a *kyai*, is not one of subordination or isolated domesticity. *Nyai* are recognized as active agents in the constitution of the *pesantren* and the wider community (Smith 2011). Conservative understandings of the Qur'an require men to be leaders of women, yet this does not exclude women from becoming orators and preachers in female-only circles. There is a distinction between a *nyai* and a preacher who is not from a *kyai* family. Women preachers and orators may also be referred to as *muballighah.* In the orthodox Muslim cultures of Lombok and Aceh, Muslim women in leadership positions are referred to as *Ummi* (Ar. 'Mother') or by local terminology, as the chapters in this volume elucidate. Similarly, the use of the term *kyai* is mostly restricted to the Javanese context, and Arabic terms such as *Abah* ('Father') or local terminology are instead used in non-Javanese cultures such as Lombok and Aceh. For the

purposes of providing a general background about leadership structures in *pesantren*, in this Introduction we use the terms *kyai* and *nyai* and ask readers to keep in mind that these are used in predominantly Javanese contexts.

The complementary, yet hierarchical relationship between *kyai* and *nyai* reflects broader Islamic constructs of male/female symmetry. This hierarchical symmetry is multi-layered, complex, paradoxical and constantly changing. In practice, masculinized decrees of sexism, degradation and discrimination constitute important variables of gendered experience in *pesantren* life, as exemplified by Mark Woodward and Inayah Rohmaniyah's chapter about a *kyai*'s desire for child brides.

It is not possible to understand the importance of the *pesantren* in Indonesian Muslim cultures without considering the social and religious significance of *kyai* and their families; both in the schools themselves and in society at large. *Kyai* are scholars and teachers, but they are also more than that. They are charismatic religious authorities who are believed to have unique abilities to communicate with God, as channels through which God's mercy and blessing enter society. *Pesantren* students, alumni and their families are intensely loyal to their *kyai*, often regarding him as being virtually a living saint. Many accept his authority without question and seek his advice and guidance concerning secular as well as religious matters. It is, for example, common to ask a *kyai* to name one's children. A *kyai*'s followers speak to him in deferential terms, touch the hem of his garments and kiss his hand in hopes of obtaining blessing (*barakah*). *Barakah* is also channelled through charms (*jimat*) that *kyai* give to their devotees and sometimes sell to others seeking their advice and blessing. *Jimat* are typically pieces of paper on which the *Fatiha* (the opening verse) or another passage from the Qur'an is written. Some *kyai* also teach their students how to make and empower *jimat*. Reverence for the *kyai* continues after death, and the graves of *kyai* are often important pilgrimage sites for *pesantren* communities.

These patterns of respect and deference extend to the *kyai*'s family, including his wife (*nyai*), daughters (*ning*) and sons (*gus*) and in some cases to his grandchildren and great-grandchildren. The position of a *nyai* in a *pesantren* parallels that of her husband. She is a revered figure, and serves as something of a foster mother to young *santri*. In *pesantren* where there are female *santri*, she plays a leading role in their religious training. Dhofier (1999) has shown that most *kyai* families are linked by descent and/or marriage. Given the bilateral nature of Javanese and many other Indonesian kinship systems, kin relations are extraordinarily complex. As a whole, these networks constitute a clerical aristocracy. Educational attainment is one path of entry into this, and elite marriage is another. The children and subsequent descendants of *kyai* are believed to inherit his sacred characteristics and powers to some degree, as chapters in this volume reveal.

Despite the patriarchy of *pesantren* culture, women possess, and are valued for religious power and agency, a theme explored by Srimulyani and Husin in Acehnese *dayah* (*pesantren*), and by Smith and Hamdi in Lombok. It is for

this reason that *kyai* often offer daughters as wives for especially promising *santri*, and for parents on the margins of this elite to seek the sons and daughters of *kyai* as spouses for their children or to offer their daughters as second (or third or fourth) wives to *kyai*. Woodward and Rohmaniyah's chapter examines the ways in which these aspects of *pesantren* culture can be manipulated by opportunistic political actors on the borders of the *pesantren* community.

The spiritual significance of a *nyai* is also important to consider. Graves of wives of potent *kyai* have become pilgrimage sites for female and male devotees, along with other popular potent *nyai*, female saints and queens (Andaya 2006; Millie 2012). Pilgrimage to graves of potent religious males and females is an important part of popular piety common among Nahdlatul Ulama practitioners and traditional Muslims throughout Southeast Asia. There are days considered to be especially auspicious for visiting graves (*ziyarah kubur*). In Java these occur once in thirty-five days on particular conjunctions of five- and seven-day weeks. The auspicious day(s) varies from one region to the next. It is also customary to visit graves before and after the fasting month of Ramadan. Many *pesantren* and Sufi orders sponsor '*haul*' to commemorate the anniversary of the founding *kyai*'s death. *Haul* are also held for saints. *Haul* generally include recitation of the *kyai*/saint's biological and spiritual genealogies, *tahlilan* (a line from the Qur'an, 'There is No God but God') and recitation of *Surah Yasin* of the Qur'an. These practices and understandings combined contribute to the formation of *pesantren* and Sufi selves.

Sufi orders (*tarekat*) and female leadership

There has been almost no feminist ethnography produced on Sufism and mysticism in Indonesia. This severe lack of feminist inquiry again reflects the hegemony of Anglo-Dutch Orientalism and Arab-centric readings of Islam in Indonesia. Feminist scholars of Indonesia had until the 1990s misread Islam in Geertzian style and overlooked in major ways the significance of notions of spiritual power that are integral to leadership succession in Sufi orders (Smith 2012). In her chapters (Smith; Smith and Hamdi), Smith extends her focus on Sufism to include the role of spiritual power in Javanese mystical groups that share characteristics and cultural context with Sufi orders, particularly the mystical group Subud as well as an analysis of female spiritual authority in a Sufi order in Lombok. The relationship between Sufism and Subud is further explored by Asfa Widiyanto in his chapter, and together they address the significant gap in knowledge by detailing new ethnographic fieldwork on the gendered dimensions of Sufism and mystical groups in Indonesia.

Tarekat are Sufi mystical orders. They have played social and political as well as religious roles in Muslim societies since the twelfth century (Schimmel 1975; Trimingham 1971). *Tarekat* organize male authority and the transmission of mystical knowledge through spiritual genealogies (*silsilah*) linking initiates to the Prophet Muhammad. They define chains of transmission and are the basis for defining local and transnational Sufi communities. In Indonesia most

tarekat are formally or informally affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama and the *pesantren* network (Zulkifli 2002). The well-known *tarekat* in Indonesia include those of Qadiriyya wa Naqshbandiyya, Naqshbandiyya, Syattariyya, Tijaniyya, Sammaniyya and Syadhiliyya (Dhofier 1999; Millie 2012; Van Bruinessen 1994b; Zulkifli 2002). *Jam'iyah Ahli al-Thariqah al-Mu'tabaroh an-Nahdliyah* (JATMAN) is an umbrella organization linking the Nahdlatul Ulama-based *tarekat* and is responsible for monitoring the correctness of transmission and practice in Sufi orders which legitimizes the practice of Sunni Sufism in its al-Ghazali mode. Mainstream Sufi interpretations and teachings of monotheism, or the Unity of God (*tauhid*), are based largely on the teachings of Abu al-Qasim al-Junayd (830–910) and Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (1058–1111), whose mystical thought was based on the principle of the Unity of Vision (*Wahdat ash-Shuhud*), according to which the human consciousness is overwhelmed by that of God in the highest spiritual states, but the ontological distinction between creator and created remains (Schimmel 1975: 368).

The al-Junayd and al-Ghazali modes of Sufism contrast to the theology of the Unity of Being (*Wahdat al-Wujud*) according to which there is ultimately no reality other than God expounded by Ibn al-Arabi and some other Sufi thinkers (Chittick 1988). Debates between proponents of these positions have held an important place in Southeast Asian Muslim discourse since the seventeenth century (al-Attas 1970; Drewes and Brakel 1986; Riddell 2001; Soebardi 1975; Woodward 1989). There are other *tarekat* more attuned to Ibn al-Arabi's teachings as well as those of the controversial historical figure al-Hallaj (d. 922) that are outside the JATMAN orbit.

Sufi religious teachings and devotional practices are very broadly diffused in Javanese and other Indonesian cultures and provide much of the basis for popular Islamic practice (Woodward 2010). There are also new organized Sufi movements that require less rigorous discipline than traditional *tarekat* that appeal to the Indonesian middle classes and students (Howell 2001, 2010). These are especially common in Jakarta and other large cities. There are less formally organized local Sufi movements in many rural areas throughout Indonesia that are also out of the radar of JATMAN.

There have been important female Sufi saints and writers since the beginnings of the tradition, including Rabi'ah Al-Adawiyah (717–801), author of the mystical poem quoted at the beginning of this chapter. As Annemarie Schimmel (2003) has observed, the concept of the divine feminine is an important thread in Sufi thought. This does not, however, mean that *tarekat* have encouraged, or allowed for, female leadership. Widiyanto's chapter explores the problematic status of women in *tarekat* from historical, comparative and Indonesian perspectives, and Smith's chapter examines cases where female leadership has actualized through the legitimization of divine revelation (*wahyu*) in Sufi orders and mystical groups. The chapters destabilize the hegemony of discourses on gender, women and Sufism that are dominated by Arab, South Asian and African contexts.

New feminisms and gender activism in *pesantren*

Margot Badran (2006) describes the Islamic feminist project in general as an inter-Islamic and global feminist discourse and practice derived from the Qur'an that seeks gender equality, rights and justice for Muslim women and men. Yet Islamic feminism is not a homogenized discourse or practice and often the terms 'Islamic' and 'Muslim' are used interchangeably to refer to this brand of religious feminism. In this volume, we broadly use the terms 'Islamic' and 'Muslim' feminism to refer to different kinds of feminist, women's and gender movements in Islam. In Indonesia, it is possible to identify differences between 'Muslim,' 'Islamic' and 'Islamist' feminism. While 'Muslim' refers to a religious-cultural subjectivity that could be liberal, secular, conservative, literalist, fundamentalist and so on, Muslim feminism typically exercises a liberal engagement with Western discourses from a secular Muslim perspective. 'Islamic' is a conservative approach to moralizing and theologizing in accordance with scripture in gender-friendly ways. 'Islamist' subject positions represent an extreme engagement with literalist Islam or fundamentalism in the attainment of a docile, patriarchal-derived form of femininity, usually with an anti-Western attitude.

Sonja Van Wichelen (2010) helps to further understand the complexity of defining feminism and its relationship with activism in Indonesia. She identifies four broad types of feminism and activism: secular feminism, Islamic women's activism, Muslim feminism and Islamist women's activism (Van Wichelen 2010: 18). Van Wichelen's four categories reflect political sensibilities and broader questions of classification and representation. While secular feminism has a powerful history in Indonesia as it grew out of women's movements associated with colonialism, and socialist and nationalist struggles, Van Wichelen (2010: 18) appropriates the descriptor 'Islamic women's activism' for Muslim women who associate feminism with lesbianism and radicalism. These women mostly belong to women's wings of the largest Islamic organizations – Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah.

The labelling of these conservative Muslim women as activists because they are fearful of the term 'feminism' is reflective of the Muslim world's more general rejection of feminism as a Western product. 'Islamic women activists' share a similar gender agenda with secular feminists, which is one that advocates women's equality with men, except with an explicit Islamic, conservative subjectivity. For Van Wichelen (2010), Muslim feminists are those who interpret the Qur'an and Hadith in female-positive ways, incorporating Islamic and secular perspectives. Muslim feminists often operate from both secular and Islamic agendas as progressive and liberal. Their subject positions mark a move from conservatism by demonstrating compatibility between Islamic-defined ideas of self and Western ideas of emancipation, as chapters by Hamdi and Srimulyani in this volume reveal.

Muslim and Islamic feminists contrast with Islamist feminists or activists who strive for gender complementarity and hierarchies (Badran 2006: 19; Van

Doorn-Harder 2006: 7). Muslim women who live in an Islamist habitus may reject feminism as a reaction to Western women's ignorant interpretation of veiled Muslim women as oppressed victims of a misogynist patriarchal religion. As Islamist, they strive to perfectly embody Islamic values that differ from notions of self and liberation in the philosophy underpinning Western feminist movements. These predominantly Wahhabi and Salafi Muslims follow what they maintain are literal interpretations of the Qur'an and *sunnah* by working towards a Muslim self that concurs with patriarchal Arabic notions of gender. In Indonesia, such groups include the pan-Islamist movements Hizbut Tarir Indonesia, Hidayatullah and Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI) and activists in political parties such as the Prosperous Justice Party. Rohmaniyah in this volume takes us further into this debate in relation to gender ideology in the MMI organization. As Islamism gains popularity, Muslim and Islamic feminists express caution in negotiations with Western values, modernity and globalization as they work to fulfil their Islamic projects (Budiman 2008).

Many women represented in this volume do not describe themselves as feminists or gender activists, because for them gender equality is mandated in the Qur'an and is a natural aspect of an Islamic lifestyle. All of these 'Muslim (feminist) selves' are concerned with gender and women's issues as they are played out in Islam, revealing the multi-discursivity of feminist and gender movements and ideologies. Often, the feminist/gender/activist modes integrate and interact with each other, rendering it problematic to categorize them. For this reason, they are best regarded as unstable categories that function only as guides for identifying different types of Muslim and *pesantren* selves.

In Indonesian Muslim circles, the term 'feminism' has generally been appropriated to identify and negotiate with the discourses of the Islamic feminist movement that first emerged in the Middle East and South Asia. The translation from English into Indonesian of Islamic feminist texts by Riffat Hassan (1990), Fatima Mernissi (1994), Asghar Ali Engineer (1999) and Amina Wadud (1994) in the 1990s was a catalyst for the movements that then developed, including feminist-oriented ones in Muslim organizations and *pesantren* (Robinson 2008). The translation of these new discourses into Indonesian made Islamic feminist ideas more accessible to a wider section of the academic and activist community, and Indonesian Muslim feminist scholars, including figures such as Wardah Hafidz, Siti Musdah Mulia, Lily Munir and Lies Marcoes-Natsir, began producing their own home-grown literature on the subject (Robinson 2008: 116).

These women can be categorized as activists and contrast to Muslim and Islamic feminist thinkers who emphasize theological issues. They are from the Nahdlatul Ulama organization and paved the way in shaping Islamic feminist and gender discourses. Although women from Nahdlatul Ulama have dominated activities in the wider gender justice movement, feminists and activists from Nasyiatul Aisyiyah (i.e. Siti Ruhaini Dzuhayatin), the women's wing of the reformist/modernist Muhammadiyah organization, have also been active in

shaping Muslim women's activism and feminist discourses in non-*pesantren* circles. Both Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah have women's wings in which Muslim women's movements have emerged (as feminist- and activist-oriented) (see Van Doorn-Harder 2006).

Pesantren belong mostly to Nahdlatul Ulama, and are the most effective network through which women with activist agendas can disseminate female-positive discourses about gender and Islam. These kinds of women's movements are mostly conservative in their engagement with gender mainstreaming activities which include workshops and training for male Muslim leaders and the general public. Their discourse is one of gender justice and equality as it concurs with Qur'anic teachings in a female-positive way at the levels of thought and praxis. The relative ease with which these women's wings operate is in part due to the positive response from male Muslim scholars in the support of gender justice in Islam. Progressive male Muslim scholars, including those who also work as *kyai*, are active in teaching gender equality in Islam, as Hamdi's chapter in this volume reveals. Male scholars including Faqihudin Abdul Kodir, Nasaruddin Umar, Masdar F. Mas'udi and Syafiq Hasyim, are well-known for their contributions to the discourse (Robinson 2008).

The most famous *kyai* to promote gender awareness was Abdurraham Wahid (Gus Dur), former Indonesian president and chair of Nahdlatul Ulama. Now deceased (d. 2009), he has been ascribed sainthood by Nahdlatul Ulama Muslims. His wife, Sinta Nuryiah, is co-founder of PUAN Amal Hayati (Pesantren for Women's Empowerment). As a *nyai* she challenges traditional gender ideologies that portray *nyai* as subordinate to *kyai*, by promoting anti-violence campaigns in *pesantren* with support from male *kyai* (Muttaqin 2008), and their daughter, Yenni Wahid, is the Director of the Wahid Centre for the promotion of pluralism. Another high-profile Muslim feminist to emerge from Nahdlatul Ulama is Siti Musdah Mulia – academic, author and activist. The late Lily Zakiyah Munir (d. 2011) and Lies Marcoes are well-known feminists who have worked in the *pesantren* network and published widely in the English and Indonesian languages. Munir was a board member of Muslimat Nahdlatul Ulama and founder of the Centre for Pesantren and Democracy Studies, which works to promote knowledge about human rights and democracy in *pesantren*.

Kyai Hussein Muhammad of Pesantren Dar al-Tauhid in Cireborn is another leading figure. He is the founder of the Fahima Institute that promotes feminist causes, and author of books reinterpreting classical legal texts from a feminist perspective. He is known for his efforts to promote female friendly interpretations of Islam and for supporting gender equity in a broader sense not only in Indonesia but in other Southeast Asian countries, including Malaysia and Singapore, and in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Hamdi's chapter (in this volume) underscores the important role of *kyai* in the feminist/gender justice movements coming out of the *pesantren* world through a detailed ethnographic examination of a women's studies centre in a Javanese *pesantren*.

Ethical questions about speaking on behalf of others, and classifying others, become pertinent in discussions of the conscious production of feminism in *pesantren*. *Pesantren* produce male and female students who go on to study what they themselves call '*feminisme*'. Significant numbers of Indonesian Masters and PhD dissertations deal with gender and feminist thought in *pesantren* from social scientific perspectives, including topics on Islamic feminism, *nyai* as agents of change, homosexuality, transvestite-only *pesantren*, and so on. The growing number of young scholars coming out of *pesantren* and forming progressive Muslim feminisms signifies a move from the conservatism of the Islamic women's activist movement. This raises ethical issues about the nature of classifying Muslim subjectivities according to imported schema, especially when Western-trained Indonesian Muslim gender activists consciously choose to use the term 'feminism' in their activism. Anthropologists must therefore work from a Muslim-based perspective rather than an Islamic one which dictates 'right' from 'wrong' and avoid essentializing either Islam or feminism. This task is increasingly complicated by the fact that terms and categories originating in social science discourse are used, though often with somewhat different meanings, in the very religious and cultural discourse that anthropologists and other social scientists analyze. It is further complicated by the fact that the social sciences can no longer be understood as Western cultural property.

In addition to the women's wings of the largest Islamic organizations, there are a number of Muslim feminist organizations, mostly based in the capital city Jakarta, that work in conjunction with *pesantren* networks to disseminate female-positive interpretations of the Qur'an and Hadith (Van Wichelen 2010: 19). Muttaqin (2008) describes how in the early stages of this movement several Muslim women from organizations including Perhimpunan Pengembangan Pesantren dan Masyarakat (P3M) (Union for Pesantren and Community Development) became feminist apprentices in secular feminist organizations (Kalyanamitra, Rifka An-Nisa, LBH APIK, and Mitra Perempuan). High-profile feminists like Farha Ciciek from Rahima (Centre for Education and Information on Islam and the Rights of Women), based in Jakarta, demonstrate the progressive elements of Muslim feminism. Most of these centres and programmes operate out of Jakarta and are dominated by Javanese.

More recently, government-backed programmes with funding from the United Nations, the Ford Foundation and other donors have sponsored gender mainstreaming training outside of Java. The women's section of United Nations, Unifem, was very active in post-Tsunami Aceh, providing gender training for women and men (see Srimulyani, this volume). Women's centres in the State Islamic Universities are also active in gender mainstreaming training through *Muslimat* and *Fatayat* women's wings of Nahdlatul Ulama, or Aisyiyah and Naisyatul Aisyiyah women's wings of Muhammadiyah, or with secular-donor funding from international aid programmes. Centre-periphery politics has it that, unlike the progressive *kyai* intellectuals in universities and *pesantren* in Jakarta and other Javanese cities, many *kyai* in regional areas

lack understanding about gender issues, domestic violence and reproductive rights.

This volume expands the analysis beyond the hegemony of gender politics in Java to include local formations of gender justice and feminisms in regional areas outside universities, women's studies centres and large Muslim organizations. Chapters by Smith and Hamdi, Srimulyani and Husin in this volume reveal the existence of local gender justice movements in *pesantren* environments in the pious and orthodox cultures of Lombok and Aceh. Their chapters document the rise of women in leadership positions in *pesantren* and Sufi orders. Smith and Hamdi disclose the ongoing challenge to form a gender awareness movement in Lombok, and Srimulyani and Husin document cases of women in leadership in Aceh, where a history of Muslim female leaders continues to guide contemporary Muslim women.

The chapters destabilize Arab/South Asian-centric and Java-centric Islamic feminist practices and discourses by not only introducing examples from Aceh and Lombok, but also by bringing Sufism into discussions on gender and Islam. Through ethnographic detail, the chapters counter the hegemony of Javanese defined notions of the *pesantren* world and the feminisms that emerge from it. In doing so, they shed light on different kinds of *pesantren* selves situated at varying locale on the religion–culture continuum that characterizes Muslim practice in Indonesia.

Questions concerning Muslim women's informal and formal authority and about who has the right to speak for, or about, Muslim women continue to occupy (Muslim) feminist scholars of Islam. Exploring these issues in Southeast Asian contexts is a complex endeavour, because most of the Muslim women we write about in this volume do not operate within emancipatory or knowledge-producing paradigms familiar to Western feminists. The Muslim feminisms we employ, engage and write about are praxis-oriented and rarely make it into print. They are not the feminisms of university departments and international journals. They are feminisms of everyday life and are situated in local contexts shaped by cultural appropriations of Islam.

Methodologically, we, and the authors of subsequent chapters, are practitioners and advocates of the Malinowskian position that ethnographic research is a time-consuming endeavour that requires immersion in communities we hope to understand. All of us have conducted research about, and at times lived, studied and taught in *pesantren* and Sufi orders for many years. We are also committed to an holistic approach to ethnography. In a general theoretical sense, the analyses presented in this volume are located at the intersection of anthropology and post-colonial and feminist theory.

Structure of the book

The volume is divided into four parts that cover issues relating to female leadership and Muslim agency (Part I), female spiritual authority in Sufi orders and mystical groups (Part II), varieties of Muslim feminisms (Part III)

and the relationship between sexuality, *shari'ah* and power (Part IV). In Part I, Smith and Hamdi, Husin, and Srimulyani introduce new ethnography on lesser-known controversies surrounding various cases of Muslim female leadership and women's movements in Lombok and Aceh. The chapters examine different ways women achieve or are ascribed leadership positions, and in doing so reveal how complex notions of Muslim agency are embedded in these processes. Part II addresses the spiritual politics associated with female authority and leadership in Sufi orders and mystical groups. Here, Smith and Widiyanto in their chapters probe into the lives of female Sufis and mystics who possess degrees of spiritual authority as they negotiate with the constraints of patriarchal doctrines that ban women from leadership. In Part III, Hamdi's and Rohmaniyah's chapters provide welcomed insight into two very different *pesantren* selves: progressive and fundamentalist Muslim feminists, and how they respond to Western feminist notions of liberation which are not always accepted in conservative and fundamentalist *pesantren* and similar schools. The volume ends with Part IV, where Woodward and Rohmaniyah reveal the complex nature of constructing male sexual desire and child marriage as Islamic in the *pesantren* world. The focus on male sexuality shifts to that of *shari'ah*-based surveillance of female sexuality in Rahayu's chapter, showing how the *pesantren* is part of a wider, globalizing society with which young women must strategize as they form their *pesantren* selves.

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Part I

Female leadership and Muslim agency

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1 Between Sufi and Salafi subjects

Female leadership, spiritual power and gender matters in Lombok

Bianca J. Smith and Saipul Hamdi[1]

DEWI mengirim sebuah kelapa
Tinggi pohonnya lima ribu depa
Batu keliling tugasnya menjaga
Pulau Lombok selama-lamanya
[DEWI sends down a coconut,
Its tree is five thousand fathoms tall;
Encircling stone with the duty to guard
The island of Lombok forever and ever]

(Zainuddin 1981)

In post-Suharto Indonesia, a revival of what is popularly known as Salafism has gained prominence in the public sphere at a national level and is challenging what it means to be Muslim. As Salafis seek to fulfil a vision of Islam in accordance with the practices of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions, gender issues feature in their efforts to de-culturalize Islam in accordance with restricted definitions of Islam based on literalist interpretations of the Qur'an. Feminist ethnographers of Islam have not yet examined widely the diversification of Islamic religiosity as it is being shaped by Salafi discourses and practices; thus we know very little about the cultural politics of Salafi interactions with Muslim majorities in everyday life situations in terms of gender.

The worlds of *pesantren* (a traditional Islamic boarding school for the study of the Qur'an, Hadith and other classical Islamic texts) and Sufi orders are exposed to Salafi discourses that groups and individuals disseminate through proselytizing practices in urban and rural areas, therefore subjecting *pesantren* and Sufi selves to ideas that contrast with their culturally anchored practices.[2] We show how in practice Salafism diversifies as it intersects with culture, and in doing so broadens meanings attributed to it while shaping a range of violent and non-violent Salafi identities and subjectivities. Our points correspond with Roel Meijer's (2009), who surmises that Salafism is a fragmented movement that evades concrete definition, and Bernard Haykel's (2009) observation that Salafism is not restricted to those with clearly formed Salafi subjectivities, but also attracts interest from non-Salafis who strategize with its visions.

This chapter develops understandings of interactions between Sufis and Salafis as fluid by moving beyond discourses on transnational Salafi movements to examine how Salafi ideas are strategically adopted by Muslim majorities in *pesantren* and Sufi orders. We examine the interplay between gender, Salafism and Sufism within a local Islamic organization's *pesantren* and Sufi order in Lombok which has had a turbulent history of female leadership based on notions of inherited spiritual power (*ilmu*).[3] Intra-Muslim debates about female leadership reflect the variety of ways gender is interpreted in Islam and suggest that culture plays a critical role in decision-making processes about what it means to be Muslim. Cultural notions of spiritual power may play roles in determining leadership succession in Sufi orders and *pesantren* (Smith 2012). In the cultures of Muslim Southeast Asia there are opportunities for women to assume leadership roles by inheriting spiritual power through spiritual bilateral kinship systems (Smith 2011, 2012). This spiritual bilateralism is situated in cultural practices that contrast to the patrilineality of *shari'ah* and sheds light on contrasting subject positions between Sufis and Salafis in orthodox contexts.

We bring to light different possibilities for Muslim female agency at a crossroads where theorizations of feminism, religion and culture intersect. This is an intersection that Saba Mahmood (2005) has described as vexed, because it challenges feminists to consider notions of piety and docility as agentive in religious movements. This is especially true for Muslim women whose formations of piety subscribe to patriarchal gender ideologies in Islam. To this rubric we add the female Sufi subject who also strives for male-defined piety based on *shari'ah* and at the same time is shaped by spiritual bilateral elements in local culture. This suggests that in *pesantren* and Sufi orders ideas about gender are subject to debate in the formation of *pesantren* selves. We examine the cultural politics between local notions of Sufism and Salafism based on debates about Islamic female leadership and gender issues to reveal the multiplicity of Muslim subject positions in *pesantren* and Sufi orders and the role of culture in shaping these.

Salafism and Sufism in Nahdlatul Wathan

Our arguments are based on anthropological fieldwork we conducted together and individually from 2006 to 2012 among the Sasak ethnic group on the small island of Lombok in the Nusa Tenggara Barat (NTB) province, eastern Indonesia.[4] The island's identity as a symbol of potent Islamic piety was challenged when Ummi Siti Raehanun (b. 1953), the daughter of a local Sufi saint, transgressed Islamic law in 1998 to become the leader of the island's largest local Islamic organization, Nahdlatul Wathan (NW). She did so by using a combination of kinship based inheritance practices and a democratic election. This was the trigger for sets of violent conflicts that in 2002 divided the organization and the Nahdlatul Wathan community more broadly. The organization remains divided ten years later under a double leadership. Raehanun's leadership is

opposed by her only sibling and half-sister, Ummi Siti Rauhun (b. 1947), whose son also claims leadership of the organization (Hadi 2010; Hamdi 2011; Hamdi and Smith 2012; Mugni 2005; Nazri 2001). The issue of Islamic female leadership has unleashed ongoing rivalry within the Nahdlatul Wathan organization and different kinds of *pesantren* selves have emerged reflecting Sufi and Salafi subject positions on gender issues. While it is possible to identify clear differences between Sufi and Salafi subject positions, it is also true that these are fluid; Sufi Salafis are an example of this fluidity.

Because Salafis seek to reform Muslim societies by establishing an ideal Islamic society based on literal interpretations of the Qur'an, they therefore may also be described as reformists. The Salafi movement dates to the pre-modern Islamic period; Bernand Haykel (2009) notes that the term 'Salafi' was first used in the ninth century to refer to a literalist interpretation of the Qur'an. Although it is possible to contrast radical Salafis with modernist reformists who strategize with democracy, modernity and religious pluralism (Van Bruinessen and Howell 2007), we argue against polarizing the two because Salafi individuals may also embrace such principles. The varieties of meaning attached to the term 'Salafi' in Indonesia illustrates the different subject positions Salafis may possess. In Indonesia and elsewhere in the world, the term 'Salafi' is often used interchangeably with the term 'Wahhabi' and these movements are assumed to have links with Saudi Arabia (Hasan 2009; Rohmaniyah and Woodward 2012; Woodward 2008). Saudi Arabian Wahhabism is a variant of Salafism and its ideologies inform fundamentalist movements such as Al-Qaeda and the Indonesian Council of Jihad Fighters (*Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia-MMI*) (Rohmaniyah and Woodward 2012). These groups contrast with popular non-violent pan-Salafi groups in Indonesia such as Hizbut Tahrir and Tabligi Jamaah.

It is important to note that Salafism is not a homogenous global movement but is rather one that is fragmented and unstable (Hasan 2009; Meijer 2009). As Salafi ideas have gained more prominence in the public sphere as a result of proselytization practices, individuals from a range of backgrounds are interacting with these ideas across discursive spaces. As a result, we see new kinds of Muslim individuals emerging who describe themselves as Salafi without identifying with any group or movement. Examples include *kyai* (male Muslim leaders) who preach Salafi forms of Islam free from the confines of Islamic schools of law yet do not belong to a movement. The literalism of Salafism contrasts with Indonesia's Sufi cultures which until the twentieth century dominated communal religious practice (Ricklefs 2006; Woodward 1989) and it is at this intersection where we locate our debates about the fluidity of Sufi and Salafi selves in *pesantren* environments. This distinction helps to situate our view that processes of Salafication contribute to the diversity of Islamic practice in Lombok as well as in the Nahdlatul Wathan organization.

In Lombok, the largest and most influential local Islamic organization is Nahdlatul Wathan, an ethnicized ('Sasakized') model of Indonesia's largest

Islamic organization, Nahdlatul Ulama that follows the Syafi'i school of law (Noor *et al*. 2004; Nu'man 1999). An estimated 50–70 per cent of Lombok's three million people identifies to varying degrees with Nahdlatul Wathan, mainly because the organization's founder became instrumental in the spread of Islamic education in the 1940s with the establishment of *pesantren* and *madrasah* in villages around Lombok (Hamdi 2011). Significant numbers of Sasak Muslims identify with the national Islamic organizations Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama, and other national groups such as Marakit Ta'limat, as well as Sufi orders and local forms of Sasak Islam known as Islam Wetu Telu.[5] Since the downfall of the Suharto regime in 1998, Wahhabi and Salafi groups have acquired popularity, especially in East Lombok. Nahdlatul Wathan, too, has accommodated elements of Salafism; however, the domination of Sufi elements remains a powerful social force in East Lombok. The strong Sufi influence assisted in Raehanun's rise to the leadership of Nahdlatul Wathan based on a local understanding that she had inherited her father's spiritual power. The maintenance of the organization which is based on dynastical rule reflects the structure of ownership of *pesantren* and Sufi orders more broadly.

The founding father of Nahdlatul Wathan (hereafter NW) is Tuan Guru[6] Kyai Hajji Zainuddin Abdul Madjid (1898–1997), popularly known by several names, including 'Maulana Syeikh', 'Tuan Guru Pancor' and 'Tuan Guru Datok'. Locally, he was considered to be a Sufi saint, spiritual leader and part-time politician (Nu'man 1999). His passing was a luminous transition from a particular way of life embedded in Sufi power structures built on notions of sworn loyalty to the guru, to a new life-stage that coincided with the downfall of President Suharto and the country's entrance into democracy. Since the onset of democracy, the Nahdlatul Wathan family dynasty has maintained a considerable influence on local politics in Lombok, holding important government positions, including that of governor (2008–13), head of the regional legislative assembly in East Lombok, Mayor of East Lombok and heads of several political parties. Many women emerged as candidates for political parties in the early phases of democracy with the national aim of filling a 30 per cent quota of women in politics. In 2009 at the NTB provincial level women constituted approximately 7.4 per cent of the parliament, compared to only 4 per cent in 2004. In Lombok, women from the NW family dynasty and non-kin NW practitioners actively pursue political careers. In 2012, approximately 28 of 378 parliament members were women. Some of these women embraced Salafi inspired political agendas.

Salafi reformist discourses became visible in NW when Rauhun's son – grandson of Maulana Syeikh – Muhammad Zainul Majdi assumed leadership of NW in 1999 in opposition to his aunt Raehanun's leadership. A decade later, he became Governor of Nusa Tenggara Barat province (2008–13) and acquired the nickname 'Tuan Guru Bajang' (young *tuan guru* – male Muslim leader). Through his leadership positions Tuan Guru Bajang has strengthened Salafi reformist discourses in NW, influenced by his exposure to the Salafi

Ikhwanul Muslimin (Muslim Brotherhood) organization in Egypt, where he also acquired his doctorate degree from Al-Azhar University.

Tuan Guru Bajang has subtly introduced a Salafi reformist discourse to the wider community that challenges the normative Sufism that the NW community practised during Maulana Syeikh's era. This discourse aims to reform Sufi cultural practices by injecting new ideas about social relations in order to deculturalize Sasak society in line with narrow definitions of Islam. Unlike clearly formed Salafi groups that strongly reject culture and intra-Muslim difference, Tuan Guru Bajang uses culture as a method for the Salafication of NW from within, which means that he does so within a Syafi'i context consistent with the normative theology of the organization. In East Lombok, the force of Sufi practice has been defined by paternal and patron–client relations between elites, *tuan guru* and ordinary villagers. Sufi relationships were instrumental in determining Raehanun's rise to power and opposed the Salafi belief in absolute male leadership. The critical role of *tuan guru* leaders in both groups reflects the emphasis on piety and orthodoxy in NW.

Lombok is known for its Islamic piety as the 'island of a thousand mosques'. Zamakhsyari Dhofier's (1999) analogy of the Javanese *kyai* as 'a king' and his *pesantren* as 'his kingdom' also applies to Sasak Muslim leaders known as *tuan guru*, whose revered authority provides them with significant amounts of social and political capital (Avonius 2004; Cederroth 1996; Hadi 2010; Hamdi 2011; MacDougall 2007). Reverence for *tuan guru* is expressed in several ways, including the practice of 'throwing money' (*melentong kepeng logam*) (which allows impoverished people to contribute to social charity and has the symbolic meaning of throwing satanic influences from one's life reflective of stone-throwing practices for the *hajj*) and by kissing the hands of Maulana Syeikh's family (including Tuan Guru Bajang) as they pass through crowds of thousands who attend their sermons. Scholars have noted that Sasak reverence for *tuan guru* has led to their own impoverishment by choosing devotion to a version of orthodox Islam that harbours anti-development (Western) attitudes (Bennett 2005; Grace 1997).

NW was founded in 1953, in Pancor, Selong, East Lombok, by Maulana Syeikh upon his return home from lengthy study in Mecca. It is an Islamic education, social and missionary (*dakwah*) organization. A product of his time, Maulana Syeikh followed other *tuan guru* to Mecca's *Madrasah Shaulatiyah*, where his spiritual abilities and religious knowledge crystallized. His charisma made him popular, but feared, in his local community, and in the early days he was seen as a reformist when he built the Pesantren Al-Mujahidin in Pancor, East Lombok (1937–40), which he later transformed into a formal *madrasah* with a modern curriculum (Baharuddin and Rasmianto 2004; Noor *et al*. 2004; Nu'man 1999). Over time his spiritual potency ascribed him to the status of a saint (*wali*) who could accurately predict the future, heal, bless and protect. He was also very productive in creating varieties of amulets endowed with Islamic *ilmu* in the form of rings, belts and pens, which he sold

to his followers to raise funds for his *madrasah* (Baharuddin and Rasmianto 2004; Nahdi 2010; Nu'man 1999; Smith 2012).

The NW organization currently manages more than 800 schools in Lombok in the form of *madrasah*, *pesantren*, public schools and higher education institutes, as well as small numbers of *madrasah* in Sumbawa, Sulawesi, Java, Kalimantan and Bali (Hamdi 2011). Attached to the *pesantren* are the *majelis taklim* (religious study groups) and Sufi orders. Sufi Studies is part of NW's normative curriculum and is taught by several Sufi masters who have been initiated into NW's Sufi order, Tarekat Hizib Nahdlatul Wathan. Maulana Syeikh studied Sufism during his schooling in Mecca, and upon receiving divine revelation (*wahyu*) he established his own *tarekat* in 1964 (Hadi 2010). The Syeikh claimed that his *tarekat* is the last in the world (*tarekat akhir zaman*), because it builds on and combines the teachings of preceding Sufi orders in a way that makes it suitable for modern living (Baharuddin and Rasmianto 2004; Hadi 2010).[7]

Tarekat Hizib Nahdlatul Wathan has been described as a pseudo-Sufi order (Hadi 2010) with its flexible recruitment and simple chanting practices. The *tarekat* has been thoroughly socialized in community schools, *madrasah*, *pesantren* and the NW women's wing, *Muslimat* NW, and can be described as communal Sufism. The central text in the *tarekat* is known as *Hizib Nahdlatul Wathan*, a small book of prayers that Maulana Syeikh complied from the Qur'an and Hadith, and the sayings and practices of seventy Sufi masters (Hadi 2010; Hamdi 2011; Smith, field notes). *Hizib* is read out loud by members at *hizib* gatherings every Thursday night at the *pesantren*, in village mosques or in a *tuan guru*'s home. The function of the *hizib* ritual is to spread the teachings of NW by maintaining solidarity and unity of its members. It is also believed that by reading *hizib*, members will gain salvation in heaven alongside Maulana Syeikh. Maulana Syeikh certified a small number of *tuan guru* as Sufi masters in villages around Lombok and in the process emphasized the basic Sufi principle of expressing loyalty to one's master. There was no formal hierarchy for these *tuan guru* initiates, but rather each was entrusted with the responsibility of developing the *tarekat* in his respective district (Hamdi and Smith 2012). Since the Syeikh's death, *tuan guru* continue to maintain the *tarekat* structure in this way, without a senior spiritual figurehead. Raehanun currently acts as a spiritual authority in the *tarekat* but does not perform roles beyond blessing and initiating new members.

The investment made in the word of the master is indispensable for Sufi disciples. Maulana Syeikh's *wasiat* (a published testament in the form of a book of poetry) is an important text which is central to the debates and conflicts that have dominated politics in NW in the aftermath of the Syeikh's death. In it, Maulana Syeikh predicted the conflict between his two daughters and the split of the NW organization which he claimed would endure for twenty years (Zainuddin 1981). The *wasiat* continues to function as a *kitab suci* (scripture) for intellectuals, *tuan guru* and students to refer to for

guidance as they interpret its mystical and political codes (Hamdi 2011; Hamdi and Smith 2012).

Raehanun's rise to leadership of NW changed the nature of Islam in East Lombok as it entered a violent period of (re-)Islamization characterized by a series of communal conflicts, which cannot be understood without a consideration of the role of political kinship (inheritance of political power) and local Sasak conceptions of spiritual power specific to the NW organization. Further, the role of Sufism also needs to be contextualized in this conflict because the spiritual strength of *tarekat* members was instrumental in qualifying the transmission of *ilmu* from Maulana Syeikh to Raehanun and thus her right to exercise authority after having been democratically elected as leader. When couched in the wider context of political kinship, there is nothing unusual about a Muslim woman assuming a leadership position in Muslim-majority nations, as evidenced by the case of former Indonesian president Megawati Sukarnoputri (2001–4). Muslim women in leadership positions demonstrate the flexibility of Islamic jurisprudence in cases where political kinship takes precedence over hegemonic claims to the legitimacy and efficacy of male rather than female leaders.

Religion, feminism and spiritual culture

The mystical or unseen realm is a significant aspect of Islamic and especially Sufi praxis and needs to be considered in a feminist analysis of female leadership in *pesantren* and Sufi orders if we are to understand the relationship between gender, religion and culture at the level of practice. A feminist analysis of *pesantren* and Sufi orders in NW thus requires an understanding of modes of female Muslim agency that are situated in life-worlds that unite material and spiritual realms. In this particular Muslim field, women and men alike strive to fulfil the vision and mission of Maulana Syeikh as their saviour in the world of the living (on earth) and in the afterlife (*akhirat*).

The unity of material and spiritual realms for Sasak Muslims cannot be underestimated for the meaning it provides in daily life. The poetry quoted at the beginning of this chapter is about Dewi Anjani, the spirit guardian of Lombok who resides at the active volcanic mountain, Gunung Rinjani, that stands in the northern district of the island. Dewi Anjani is queen of *jin* (Muslim and non-Muslim spiritual creatures) and has a lineage which tells of her life histories and spiritual functions among Lombok's ethnic Sasak people. Ascetics, sorcerers and Sufis seek to marry her, to work with her, or request health, wealth, love or assistance from her. Like other Sasak Muslims, Raehanun and her father, Maulana Syeikh, also claim to have a special relationship with her. This special relationship demonstrates the powerful influence the spiritual realm has on local politics, and subsequently, when the relationship is qualified through negotiations with the hegemonic religious order, the role it can play in legitimizing female leadership in Islamic organizations.

Here we problematize the Muslim woman subject as leader through an analysis of Raehanun's rise to succeed her father's leadership by considering

notions of spiritual kinship in determining succession in *pesantren* and Sufi orders. Raehanun's inheritance of her father's spiritual power helped to legitimize her leadership and dramatically contributed to wider debates about Muslim gender. Raehanun's rise to leadership in her father's organization at a spectacular time in Indonesian history – the downfall of the Suharto regime and the onset of democracy – coincided with the formation of a Salafi reformist agenda that had been taking shape in Lombok and which was patronized by her only sibling and half-sister, Rauhun and Rauhun's son, Tuan Guru Bajang. Rauhun and her supporters' absolute rejection of female leadership materialized into violent conflict, which split the organization into two new and separate bodies (Hamdi and Smith 2012).

When Maulana Syeikh passed away in 1997, *tuan guru* loyalists declared in controversy that the Syeikh's spiritual power descended to his youngest daughter, Raehanun. And, with this, so too descended Dewi Anjani's loyalty. This was consolidated at the election in 1998 of Raehanun to lead the NW organization and clarified several political discourses and Salafi reformist agendas in the organization. The Salafi reformists, led by Rauhun and Tuan Guru Bajang, reasoned that women cannot be leaders of men by divine decree. The different ways of interpreting female leadership in the Syafi'i school of law in Islam divided the sisters and the NW community (Hamdi 2011; Hamdi and Smith 2012; Nazri 2001).

Raehanun's transgression of male-to-male succession based on cultural notions of spiritual power suggests that Islamic organizations and their *pesantren* and Sufi orders are ethnicized institutions that create multiple Muslim and *pesantren* selves that can conflict with normative patriarchal readings of Islam. The conflict in question is a transgression of normative law in a debate over gender and leadership, and it is also one that does not make wider claims that seek to reform hegemonic constructs of correct ways of being a Muslim woman in conservative environments; it suggests that gender transgressions can take place in *pesantren* and Sufi orders without challenging Muslim patriarchy (Smith 2012). The absence of a women's movement in NW contrasts with other Indonesian Islamic organizations, such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, that have well-organized feminist or gender justice movements (see Hamdi, this volume; Srimulyani, this volume). Pious women in NW are predominantly and consistently exposed to conservative and Salafi-derived gender ideologies that contrast to the secular and liberal ideologies of other Islamic organizations' women's movements.

When mapped onto the spectrum of meaning that the interrelation between religion and culture produces in praxis, gender ideologies may be flexible and contradictory in a range of different contexts. A reading of the religion–culture relationship from a gender perspective helps to understand why Raehanun and her father's Sufi discourses accommodated cultural notions of spiritual bilateralism while at the same time supported gender ideologies influenced by *shari'ah* based notions of gender. The flexbiltiy of the religion–culture continuum further facilitated the accommodation of elements of Salafi notions of absolute

male domination which Rauhun used to reject female leadership and preach reformation in attempts to de-culturalize Sasak Islam. These women are equally pious subjects, undesirous of a feminist consciousness, and seek to be with Maulana Syeikh in the afterlife. The sisters selectively engage with gender in both religious and cultural ways that define how they animate their lives as gendered Sasak Muslims. The contestation in Lombok about Islamic female leadership and other gender matters thus may be positioned in the scholarly discourse on Muslim women more generally at a delicate crossroads between culture, Salafism and Islamic/Muslim debates on gender and feminism (for more on these debates see Budiman 2008; Engineer 2004; Mir-Hosseini 2011; Moghadam 2002).

Contesting female leadership through conflict and spiritual power (*ilmu*)

Little is known about traditions of *pesantren* leadership by wives and daughters of *kyai*. Transgressions of Islamic law by women may be sanctified by *ilmu* linked to local kinship practices, instilling in them degrees of spiritual capital and legitimizing their inheritance of authority (Smith 2012, this volume). There are two distinct forms of *ilmu* which manifest differently depending on context. Islamic *ilmu* possessed by *kyai* contrasts to the generic *jampi-jampi* (mantra or spell) found in island Southeast Asia, which in Lombok is commonly found in family lineages. *Jampi-jampi* are forms of *ilmu* that are said to be ancestral *jin* that families safeguard and pass on to male and female children to be used for healing, protection and other specifications.

In Sasak culture, negotiations with local conceptions of *ilmu* are not necessarily gendered when it comes to the presentation of *ilmu* in bodies: it may descend bilaterally from parents to male and female children or other kin and affords degrees of local authority for those who embody it in potent ways. The preference for spiritual power to descend to either male or female children contrasts with the transmission of knowledge in Islam which is based on Arab-derived *shari'ah* law, which values males in leadership. It also differs from normative Sufi orders which acknowledge a male-defined *silsilah* (a spiritual chain of transmission that links Sufi orders (*tarekat*) to the Prophet Muhammad). Raehanun's transgression of the Syafi'i school of law led to the eruption of physical violence in the pious community and revealed the extreme subject positions between Salafi reformists and Sufis who revere the traditions that Maulana Syeikh maintained as normative in the NW organization. The latter group values local concepts of *ilmu* as a legitimate form of power.

The death of Maulana Syeikh in October 1997 marked the beginning of a process of change that impacted the NW organization and *pesantren* community alike, changing the formation of NW society. Prior to his death, Maulana Syeikh did not appoint a spiritual successor; although several *tuan guru* claimed that he verbally declared on his deathbed that Raehanun should be consulted over any issue in the *pesantren* and organization (Mugni 2005). Other *tuan guru* from pro-Rauhun factions make similar claims which

support Rauhun as the legitimate leader. With Maulana Syeikh's death, NW was left without an official spiritual leader, leaving space for the community to interpret which of the Syeikh's two daughters had inherited his *ilmu* (Hamdi 2011).

The election for head of NW held on 26 July 1998 in Praya, Lombok was a precursor to the violence that followed. When Raehanun's name emerged as a candidate alongside her male uncle, Ma'sum Ahmad (who was acting head of the organization at that time), pro-Rauhun supporters were insulted and walked out based on the charge that Raehanun is a woman, and women cannot be leaders according to the Syafi'i school of law (Hadi 2010; Hamdi 2011; Mugni 2005). After several consultations with highly respected *tuan guru*, it became apparent that the majority of *tuan guru* interpreted that in the Syafi'i school of law women may become leaders, except of the nation and mixed gender congregational prayers. In support of this claim, those *tuan guru* reasoned that Maulana Syeikh had appointed a woman as village head in East Lombok; Muhammad's wife Aisyah had been a leader in war; and Queen Balqis, the prophet Sulaiman's wife, had been leader of the kingdom.

Ma'sum Ahmad was unsatisfied with their explanation and disagreed based on his understanding that Maulana Syeikh had never appointed a woman as leader of NW. He too left the forum and declared that he would bear no responsibility for the outcome of the election (Hamdi 2011; Mugni 2005; Nazri 2001). The political situation created tension not only among the two sisters and the NW elites, but also at the community level among supporters. Eventually small-scale intensive violence and disorder erupted, with two clearly defined groups emerging: one group followed Raehanun and the other followed Rauhun (Hadi 2010; Hamdi 2011; Hamdi and Smith 2012). Raehanun and her supporters were eventually driven out of Pancor and were divinely called to Anjani – a village with a history of millenarian movements (Macdougall 2007). It was here, in 1999, that Raehanun and her loyal *tuan guru* leaders built a new *pesantren* with the assistance of Dewi Anjani. This was interpreted as a sign of Maulana Syeikh's support for Raehanun.

That same year, Ma'sum Ahmad and Rauhun arranged another election in the organization which they called the Reformation Congress. The outcome determined the succession of leadership by Rauhun's son, Muhammad Zainul Majdi (Tuan Guru Bajang). Rauhun and her followers believe that Tuan Guru Bajang (as grandson of Maulana Syeikh) is the right person to lead NW because he has mastered Islamic knowledge at the doctoral level. The result of the Reformation Congress further cemented the split between NW Anjani and NW Pancor (Hadi 2010; Hamdi 2011; Mugni 2005; Nazri 2001), creating a fragile double leadership that eventually exploded into bloody conflict in the *pesantren* and among NW supporters which led to destruction of homes and villages and hundreds of casualties and deaths (Hamdi 2011; Hamdi and Smith 2012; Smith 2012). During this time, the two new leaders actively pursued public sermons to attain sympathy from village supporters

which in fact contributed to the reproduction of the conflict and severely impacted local life in villages until fighting ceased in 2002. The organization remains divided more than a decade later, despite the emergence of a discourse of reconciliation (Baharuddin and Rasmianto 2004; Hamdi 2011; Hamdi and Smith 2012).

Pesantren are by design patriarchal institutions where leadership descends to a *kyai*'s male kin or otherwise a loyal learned student. If the *pesantren* specializes in Sufism, *ilmu* also must descend to a male kin member or disciple, affording him status if he is spiritually potent. In many *pesantren*, the politics of *ilmu* is part of a *kyai*'s teaching curriculum. In Lombok, the intersecting roles of kinship, *ilmu* and Sufi notions of loyalty were instrumental in facilitating Raehanun's leadership; a transgression from male to female leadership in a patriarchal institution. From early on in his religious career, Maulana Syeikh promoted gender equality in Islamic education, suggesting that women's active participation was not an unfamiliar notion for loyal *tuan guru* who followed the Syeikh's orders to legitimize Raehanun as their new leader.

The descent of spiritual power to Raehanun created frustration in the Pancor community, because, according to the rules of *adat* (customary laws and practices), Rauhun as the eldest and most educated sibling had the right to be considered over her younger sister. Given this, Rauhun supporters further rejected Raehanun based on her status as an uneducated housewife who had been inactive in the organization (Hamdi 2011; Mugni 2005; Nazri 2001). Saipul Hamdi (2011) has argued that Raehanun and Rauhun's status as half-sisters from different mothers affected the relationship the sisters had with each other and how they were perceived in the *pesantren*. It is said that Raehanun's mother was the Syeikh's favourite. She was very loyal and accompanied him until his death. It is claimed that the Syeikh's love for this woman led him to divorce Rauhun's mother. As Hamdi (2011) points out, one important variable overshadowed any claims to challenge Raehanun's legitimacy as leader: Raehanun's mother was Sasak and Rauhun's was Javanese, explaining why the Syeikh's *ilmu* bypassed Rauhun and authenticated Raehanun. This indicates that cultural and ethnic symbols as well as religiosity play critical roles in the legitimization of power and authority in *pesantren* and Sufi orders.

The Syeikh's eldest daughter, Rauhun, completed her studies at the *pesantren* and acquired a teacher's degree in Pancor, eventually becoming the school principal and a teacher at *mu'allimat* (senior high school for girls) in the *pesantren* complex. Maulana Syeikh also entrusted her with the position of head of the women's wing *Muslimat* NW, a position she held until March 2009 when her daughter Siti Rohmi Djalilah replaced her due to ill health. Her first husband was the head of NW for two periods during 1969–77. The family situation in the *pesantren* at this time was dominated by contest for power and control by non-kin factions (Hamdi 2011). Eventually conflict erupted when Rauhun's husband was expelled from the organization, taking their five children with him (Hamdi 2011). Maulana Syeikh reinstalled himself as head for the period 1977–86, and was succeeded by Raehanun's first husband

until 1997, when he died. At this time the sisters' uncle, Ma'sum Ahmad, was vice head and automatically replaced Raehanun's husband in the aftermath of his unexpected death. Debates emerged about Rauhun's lack of loyalty to Maulana Syeikh, especially given that her husband and her children were ostracized from the *pesantren*. This placed Raehanun, as Sasak, in a favourable position and confirmed that Rauhun was an inappropriate channel for his *ilmu*.

In contrast to her older sister, Raehanun did not complete her university education after graduating from senior high school. She pursued, but never finished, a degree at an Islamic university in Malang, East Java where her husband also studied. During 1973–78 she was treasurer at the girls' and boys' *madrasah*, and during 1999–2004 she was a member of the People's Consultative Assembly (*Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat*) representing the Golkar political party (Hamdi 2011). However, until assuming leadership of NW in 1998, she was a housewife and mother of seven children. Raehanun married her second husband, Abdul Hayyi Nu'man (d. 2011), after she assumed leadership of NW. Prior to his wife's leadership, Nu'man had held minor positions in the organization and only after marrying her did he assume numerous important roles in the organization. A minority of NW intellectuals claim that Nu'man and his confidants strongly influenced Raehanun's decisions, and thus viewed Raehanun as a puppet for specific religious leaders to control in their pursuit of power and status.

The family narrative is full of stories of betrayal. This, together with the role of *tuan guru* in the Sufi structure maintained by Maulana Syeikh for forty years, forged a society dominated by mystical ways of being. Despite the emergence of Salafi reformist discourses under the leadership of Tuan Guru Bajang, some members of NW Pancor protested that it was Rauhun, and not Raehanun, who inherited Maulana Syeikh's *ilmu*. This protest carved more contradictions into this debate by revealing that, despite Rauhun's public disapproval of women in leadership, her supporters identified her as a symbolic figurehead of NW Pancor.[8] Two contrasting discourses emerged over the legitimacy of female leadership: a Salafi reformist one that in the public sphere associated women with emotion, weakness and child-rearing and at the same time valued informal female leadership; and an orthodox Sufi one that legitimized bilateral descent of spiritual power from the Syeikh to his daughter.

During an interview Smith conducted with Raehanun at her *pesantren* in 2008, she reasoned that conflict occurred because she is female. She defended the decision of the 1998 election which clearly demonstrated her triumph, claiming that NW could not reunite unless the Pancor side acknowledged that she is the rightful head of the organization. In her understanding of Syafi'i law there is no banning of women as leaders of social and religious organizations. She explained that her father encouraged women to assume leadership roles as part of his mission to release Sasak women from the restrictions of *adat*, an issue to which we now turn.

The saint's Islamic gender agenda

In order to interpret the gendered aspects of the historical context which served as a foundation for Raehanun's leadership, it is necessary to understand the formation of gender discourse and practice in NW. The Islamization of Lombok contributed to changing Sasak constructions of gender. Women were critical to the development of NW in its early years, particularly through the establishment in 1943 of an all-girls' *madrasah*, Madrasah Nahdlatul Banat Diniah Islamiyah (NBDI). Maulana Syeikh's struggle for girls' education intensified when he formed a local army to resist Dutch and Japanese forces in their attempt to close down his schools in the 1940s (Nu'man 1999). The local community at the time also showed resistance to girls' education, as it was still a new concept. In his *wasiat*, Maulana Syeikh explicitly justifies the importance of both girls' and boys' education,

> The NW organization is a passionate creation of 'NWDI [boys' *madrasah*] and NBDI [girls' *madrasah*]' which spreads the wings of education. It is therefore the duty of NWDI boys and NBDI girls to work together, with all their might, to defend and struggle for the aspirations of NW. Those who remain passive or obstruct this goal shall relinquish their responsibilities to NW, and thus relinquish responsibility to themselves.
>
> (Zainuddin 1981)

The fusion between the boys' and girls' *madrasah* forms the heart of the NW *pesantren* and organization and reinforces the Syeikh's persistent stress on the co-dependency and unity of the two which he expressed in the phrase, '*Dwi Tunggal Pantang Tanggal*' (Two United, Together Forever in Unity) (Nu'man 1999; 2001).

The Syeikh's emphasis on a unified spiritual bilateralism, symbolized by the boys' and girls' *madrasah*, contrasts with village kinship systems which in Lombok are generally patrilineal. However, gender is also organized bilaterally, emphasizing a complementarity between men and women in a range of social and familial practices (Telle 2007). This complementarity is further demonstrated by a large number of Sasak who continue to engage in agriculture and subsistence farming that requires both men and women to work in fields; both perform integral roles in community *slametan* and *syukuran* life-crisis rituals[9] and child-rearing, and, in cases of marriage, bride-wealth is practised (where the groom's family pays a price or gives a gift to the bride's family) (Asnawi 2006; Bennett 2005; Smith 2009). Families may choose to use either Islamic or *adat* hereditary systems, both which favour males but do not necessarily disadvantage females. Divorce is easily acquired and serial marriage–divorce is common (Bennett 2005; Budiwanti 2000; Grace 2004; Smith 2009). *Adat* practices are similar to those in other cultures in Indonesia and Southeast Asia and are in a constant negotiation with Islam and modernization.

Linda Rae Bennett (2005) has documented the complexity of young women's lives in Lombok's capital city, Mataram, and the sexual health issues

they face as they negotiate with modernity in urban settings. These women's experiences contrast significantly to the ones we present in this chapter who live in a regional, orthodox Islamic society that places their morality, sexuality and behaviour under ongoing surveillance (Smith 2009). Lombok, like other regional areas, suffered from underdevelopment during the Suharto regime, resulting in poor infrastructure, an undereducated population and high rates of child and maternal mortality (Bennett 2005; Hay 2004; Hunter 1996). Since the downfall of ex-President Suharto, regional autonomy has enabled Sasak leaders to assume government positions and develop capacity-building programmes with a focus on infrastructure, health and education. For those who face unemployment, migration has become a popular choice. Lombok has one of the highest rates of migration for work purposes to Malaysia, Saudi Arabia and Hong Kong. This has impacted Lombok's high divorce rate, which in turn has facilitated serial marriage–divorce and polygamy practices (Smith 2009).

At the time Maulana Syeikh began spreading Islam in the 1930s, women's social lives were defined by child marriage and the traditional social rank system that placed heavy restrictions on who one could marry (Baharuddin 2007; Budiwanti 2000). Through his proselytizing Maulana Syeikh sought to empower women by teaching that Islam provided relief from unjust *adat* practices; he advised that marriage is to enlighten, not burden, one's family (Baharuddin 2007; Budiwanti 2000; Syakur 2006); he never instructed women to wear the *jilbab* (veil); he appointed a woman as village leader; and his daughter, Rauhun, was appointed as school principal and head of NW's women's wing. From an early age Rauhun and Raehanun followed their father to his public sermons, and at 7 years of age they began giving speeches to the Muslim public (Noor *et al.* 2004; Nu'man 1999).

Maulana Syeikh's missionary programmes focused on teaching women to be ideal pious subjects. He also justified the practice of polygamy as a method for spreading Islam. He married a total of seven women throughout his life, but had only four wives at any one time. Many of his wives came from villages that rejected his reformist teachings in the 1930s (Hamdi 2011; Noor *et al.* 2004). Discourses on polygamy remain popular in NW, as they serve a wider purpose in NWs development (Smith 2009), particularly in *pesantren* environments where polygamy serves to spread and strengthen Islam. In farming communities, polygamy is often used as a way to strengthen weak economies or to form alliances, and because it is also common to marry and divorce several times during life, polygamy and divorce have become social practice (Grace 2004; Smith 2009). Discourses on polygamy feature in the curriculum in Raehanun's new *pesantren* and are situated in the context of male-defined notions of piety.

Formations of male-defined piety in the new female-led *pesantren*

In the words of Mahmood (2005: 4–5), the Sasak Muslim women loyal to Maulana Syeikh described in this chapter could be said to

> occupy an uncomfortable place in feminist scholarship because they pursue practices and ideals embedded within a tradition that has historically accorded women a subordinate status … associated with … the subjugation of women … cultural backwardness, and so on.

This kind of understanding, which renders it difficult to locate notions of Muslim feminist agency such as those of Nahdlatul Ulama's and Muhammadiyah's feminist activists, misses an important perspective which suggests that these Muslim women, to the contrary, interpret their discourse and practices as enlightening. As they self-Islamize in accordance with notions of male-defined piety, many NW women feel empowered as Muslims.

Islamic discourse is taught to the community through public sermons and through the women's wing, *Muslimat* NW, which is responsible for holding weekly women-only study groups that concentrate on carving pious feminine subjectivities in accordance with the virtues of patriarchal based Islamic gender scripts. Where feminist activists of Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah challenge patriarchal gender scripts, the lack of a gender justice consciousness in NW is in part because of the doxic understanding that Islam has already emancipated women; that Maulana Syeikh liberated women when he established his all-girls' *pesantren* in 1943. For these women, gender is already realized and ideal in Islam. However, gender did matter when Raehanun succeeded the leadership, yet it was the *ways* in which it mattered that was contested. Within this contestation over female leadership, ways of being Muslim and gendered remained consistent with Islamic values in both factions of the split organization. Both factions continue to profess an Islamic worldview that values docile Islamic forms of femininity and both must negotiate these with the array of divergent Islamic discourses encroaching on their fields. This casts NW in a different light to its sister organizations in Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, which have active gender justice and/or feminist movements.

The village environment in East Lombok favours Islamic education, and, due to poor infrastructure, underdevelopment and the impoverishment of the region in general, women have not had the same opportunities as those in Java or other developed islands. This kind of isolation and social impoverishment reinforces the appeal and strength of Islam, and enables religious leaders to indoctrinate more effectively. Without ample access to competing discourses women negotiate with what is available to them. Again, this is not to suggest that these women desire or want to release themselves from their life-worlds. In the capital Mataram, women are active in women's centres as part of a gender justice movement, but these are not associated with NW, which has no clearly defined community of female intellectuals or activists.

Raehanun is the official head of her *pesantren*. The structure of the new *pesantren* is similar to the original one in Pancor except that, unlike *tuan guru* (or *kyai*), she does not live at the *pesantren* and nor does she teach there. She spends most of her time travelling around Lombok and NTB delivering public sermons and raising funds for the *pesantren*. There are two *tuan guru*

who live in the *pesantren* community and they are responsible for the day-to-day maintenance and functioning of the dormitories. Other *tuan guru* who teach at the *pesantren* live in different areas and manage their own *majelis taklim*, *madrasah* and *pesantren* as branches of NW.

Despite having a female leader, male-interpreted Islamic discourses continue to dominate Raehanun's *pesantren* curriculum with the understanding that women will be empowered if they can achieve Islamic-defined ideal femininity. Raehanun has therefore not introduced new competing gender discourses to the *pesantren* curriculum and neither has she considered introducing female teachers despite almost equal numbers of male and female students. The dominant gender discourse for women remains that of how to become a good Muslim housewife, mother and educator, and to be loyal to the *tuan guru*. Polygamy is still practised and promoted by *tuan guru* and is taught as part of the curriculum. As she strongly believes in women's subjective formation of a pious femininity, Raehanun introduced a final year course consisting of cooking and sewing classes for female students to prepare them for marriage and motherhood. The majority of students that graduate from the *pesantren*, in addition to marrying, actively seek to (re-)Islamize society by establishing new *madrasah* or by becoming Islamic teachers (men establish *madrasah*, not women). Not all students study full-time and many pursue combined studies at other higher education institutes, which broadens their employment options after they graduate; most, though, become religious teachers in *madrasah* – a field with increasing numbers of women.

Many of the *santri* in both Anjani's and Pancor's *pesantren* continue the practice of Maulana Syeikh's Tarekat Hizib Nahdlatul Wathan by joining Sufi groups with qualified *tuan guru*. Daughters of *tuan guru* who specialize in Sufism are well known for their inheritance of *ilmu*. Some young women from the *tarekat* who specialize in *wirid* (practice of reciting verses from the Qur'an in the hope that God will grant a request) claim to have a special relationship with Dewi Anjani. The more powerful the *wirid*, the more access they have to spiritual realms (*gaib*) where they form relationships with *jin*. Dewi Anjani is said to advise several young women in their marital affairs and hardships (Smith, field notes). Young women who qualify as spiritually powerful are thus respected in the Sufi community.

Preaching to the pious: the rise of independent Indonesian Muslim women in *pesantren*

In 2008, a momentary discourse of gender emerged in Raehanun's organization at the sixty-fifth anniversary of the first all-girls' *madrasah* (NBDI), called 'The Rise of Independent Indonesian Muslim Women'. Several leading female figures and *tuan guru* from the *pesantren* gave speeches to a crowd of thousands of Raehanun's supporters. The promotion of an Islamic gender discourse in support of girls' education revealed multiple subject positions relating to gender. One of the speakers included Raehanun's daughter Lale

Mining, a school principal and co-wife of a prominent politician. In her speech, Lale Mining encouraged women to not be dependent on anybody, including men and husbands, as this makes women uncreative and weak. She said that in these hard times it is difficult to find work which does not give women many options other than to focus on building the family economy. She further stated that,

> the public sphere is no longer sacred nor does it any longer belong to men, however although women are active in the public sphere they must not forget their role as women by remembering Islamic values so that they stay on the religious path. Ideally, women should balance life between public and private spheres, always with a focus on protecting the family.
>
> (Mining 2008)

The gender consciousness evoked in Lale Mining's speech contrasts with that of her mother's, which relied on notions of *kafir* (non-believers) to assert the superiority of Islam over Western gender ideologies:

> The NWDI and NBDI *madrasah* are two schools that can be likened to the ancestors of Nahdlatul Wathan … Women should be visible in every area but should not forget their feminine nature. We must be careful to not follow Western concepts of gender … because Western concepts of gender are opposite to concepts of gender in *shari'ah* Islam. They don't allow polygamy or the *jilbab* because it restricts women's movements and activities. They disagree with the way we divide inheritance, considering it unjust because women receive less than men. I know polygamy is sick [and hurts women] but we are not allowed to hate or ban polygamy because it has been decreed in Islam. *Shari'ah* Islam permits polygamy but in order to practise polygamy justly one must fulfil several conditions.
>
> (Raehanun 2008)

The issue of polygamy continued at this event in a speech by a *tuan guru* (who practises polygamy). He cautioned men on the qualifications needed for polygamy – they must be (1) healthy in body and spirit; (2) financially comfortable and stable; and (3) fair and just in the household. Several of the *tuan guru* in Raehanun's *pesantren* practise polygamy, and it remains a preached discourse in the community despite the pain it causes some women (Smith 2009). In their speeches, *tuan guru* also encouraged women to pursue political careers in reference to Maulana Syeikh's vision of NW as a union of male and female which supports women in education and in leadership positions, as did prophet Muhammad. Indirectly, and by referring to a history of female leaders in Islam, they reassured the public that it is acceptable for Raehanun to continue leading NW.

The issues raised in the speeches at this event display some varieties of Muslimness available to women in their NW field of practice. The contrast Raehanun made in her speech between Western and Islamic gender discourses is situated in a politics of *kafir*, which serves to create separation and opposition between Islamic and Western ideas about gender, and reinforces the unity of male and female in NW. Lale Mining's and Raehanun's speeches indicate that they are aware of dominant Islamic- and Western-influenced feminist discourses, and yet their insistence on a form of NW piety is constantly linked to Maulana Syeikh's struggle for Islam through the union of the girls' and boys' *madrasah* – the ancestors of NW. Despite the emergence of a gender awareness at this event, the daily discourse that young women and men have access to in the *pesantren* is managed by male *tuan guru*, and there has been a lack of enthusiasm to integrate the gender discourses raised at the event into the daily sermons or curriculum at Raehanun's *pesantren* or in *Muslimat* wings.

Contradictory Salafi gender practices

Ongoing conflict and the double-leadership of the organization halted activities in *Muslimat* NW women's wings in both Anjani and Pancor until recently. The debate about female leadership was reignited in Rauhun's Salafi reformist area of Pancor, when Rauhun's daughter, Siti Rohmi Djalilah, assumed the following three leadership positions: head of the women's wing in NW Pancor, head of the social wing of NW Pancor and head of the legislative assembly in East Lombok (until 2014). Salafi reformist NW male intellectuals, in particular, contested the contradictory practices Rauhun's family displayed in public after thirteen years of not acknowledging Raehanun's leadership based on her sex. They claimed that, like in Anjani, the *mazhab* in pro-Rauhun Pancor had become unclear: 'We adhere to the statement in the Qur'an that decrees men as leaders of women: *arrijalu qawwamu na alannisa*. A *pesantren* and its organization is no longer a *pesantren* if a female is in a leadership position', a pro-Rauhun reformist male intellectual explained in an interview with Hamdi in 2011.

Rauhun's family responded with the argument that Siti Rohmi Djalilah is the most qualified to fulfil the demands of these positions, given that all her male kin are committed in their respective positions. They further argued that Siti Rohmi Djalilah's leadership in the government falls outside the contested realm of social organizations subject to Syafi'i law and therefore is in accordance with national law that does not restrict women from becoming leaders. Rauhun's inner circle has muted these debates and Siti Rohmi Djalilah remains in her leadership positions. Siti Rohmi Djalilah, together with her brother (as Governor of NTB) and her new husband (from the Islamist political party Prosperous Justice Party), is slowly working with a Salafi reformist agenda to deconstruct the myths embedded in narratives and memories of Maulana Syeikh and Sufi practices. Siti Rohmi Djalilah works to empower communities in East Lombok through implementing government development

and health programmes (clean water and cataract removal, for example) without a focus on gender. She does not problematize Islamic discourses on women or the male production and management of discourse in the *pesantren*.

Attempts to build gender justice awareness in Raehanun's *pesantren* community

By contrast, there have been moves in Raehanun's NW community in Anjani to introduce a gender justice discourse at the grassroots level through the creation of a Centre. This is part of a regional government initiative through the Women's Empowerment and Family Planning Programme, which focuses on women's empowerment, youth reproductive health issues and domestic violence awareness.[10] The head of *Muslimat* NW was asked by the local government to help form the Centre, with the aim of spreading a gender justice discourse through the community to assist women. As Director, she expressed the difficulties she has faced in introducing the programme, not to the community, but to Raehanun and *tuan guru* leaders who are opposed to what they interpret as an invasion of family privacy.

After participating in several government-sponsored training workshops on women's empowerment, the Centre has held only a few seminars for teachers and *Muslimat* members. 'Without the support of Raehanun or *tuan guru*', the Director explained in an interview with Hamdi in 2011, 'it is difficult for these programmes to run'. She continued,

> Something needs to be done to address the rise in social issues in East Lombok which has the highest rate of divorce due to the migration abroad for work, as well as teenage marriages between uneducated youths. Domestic violence, sexual harassment, incest and rape are ongoing problems that need to be dealt with, but we are blocked because these issues are considered private and taboo in the Muslim community.

The Centre uses public sermons as a method to reach the community and therefore relies on the cooperation of *tuan guru*. At present, *tuan guru* are reluctant to join the training programmes, leaving it to women *Muslimat* representatives who have participated in training at Rifka An-Nisa in Yogyakarta and Mataram and with the women's wings of Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah. Some *tuan guru* do cooperate, however, in spreading awareness about domestic violence in their speeches. Raehanun expresses no interest in this project and has recently been accused of corruption along with her loyal advisers by a former sympathizer in Mataram. Maulana Syeikh's family continues to dominate social, religious and political life in a community where gender does, and does not, matter.

As young people gain increased awareness of alternative gender discourses through exposure to media such as television and the internet, they are educating themselves and making their own choices about gender. Most *santri* from *pesantren* subscribe to Islamic values and marry endogamously, forming pious Muslim families, but many also migrate to other parts of Indonesia for education and work purposes, signalling a shift in village consciousness dominated by Sufism and competing Salafi discourses in NW.

Conclusion

Although *pesantren* across Indonesia have an identifiable gender culture based on Islamic jurisprudence, it is crucial to analyze a *pesantren* based on its wider cultural and historical context, because certain events and the ways in which such events occur are largely determined by the wider cultural and social forces specific to a local culture. *Pesantren* culture is Islamic and is constantly strategizing with Arabic discourses, yet it is also enmeshed in and competes with the society in which it functions. The popularity of Salafism also enters the fields of *pesantren* and Sufi orders through proselytizing practices, and therefore fragments as individuals engage with aspects of its vision. The formation of *pesantren* and Sufi selves is therefore a fluid process that enables individuals to strategize with Salafi and Sufi subject positions in NW. This was clearly demonstrated by Raehanun's rise to leadership and the opposition she faced based on competing Salafi ideas about absolute male domination.

The debates about female leadership in NW are historically situated in a broader NW gender discourse, which Maulana Syeikh began forming in the 1940s when he started advocating girls' education. To understand why *tuan guru* and others in Raehanun's *pesantren* support female leadership, it is therefore necessary to have a broader understanding of the position of women in the history of NW and Sasak culture. Reading gender through the Muslim body of Raehanun reveals that members of NW's Sufi community understand that she is endowed with her father's *ilmu*. Raehanun's link to the world of *jin* through Dewi Anjani is kept alive by the belief that her headquarters at the *pesantren* is on a spiritual path that leads directly to Dewi Anjani. The spiritual backing serves to legitimize her authority, as it originates in an old discourse that Maulana Syeikh kept alive as part of his practice of Sufism, which young female Sufi practitioners of the *tarekat* continue to maintain through their spiritual relationship with Dewi Anjani. This tells us that, in the NW context, we cannot read 'Sasak' without reading 'Islam', because the two are part of a greater sense of local religiosity in the formation of *pesantren* and Sufi selves.

It is the intimate meeting between local culture and religion that reveals different subject positions inherent in feminist theorizations of agency. In this case the interacting subject positions of Sufis and Salafis reveal that there are several modalities of Muslim agency available to women in NW in a Sasak

field of practice. This religious-cultural identity is central to developing knowledge about gender and power in Indonesia because the cultural appropriation of Islam in local contexts is crucial to understanding how Islam as praxis is played out. The consideration of religion as another marker at the feminist intersection of gender, culture, ethnicity and class opens up new avenues for reinterpreting concepts of power and agency and the junctures which support them. At junctures in *pesantren* and Sufi orders, gender practices may remain consistent with patriarchal gender scripts that define notions of female piety and behaviour in docile ways, yet cultural elements such as spiritual bilateral kinship systems allow for gender transgressions to take place without necessarily seeking to reform the authoritative nature of patriarchy more generally.

Notes

1 Smith's research was funded by the Australia Endeavour Cheung Kong Awards for Postdoctoral Research in Asia. Hamdi's research was sponsored by the Sasakawa Japanese Foundation. Thanks to Stuart Robson for assisting in the translation of Maulana Syeikh's poetry.

2 The notion of a *pesantren* or Sufi self refers to individuals who form their sense of self and Muslim identity in the context of a *pesantren* or Sufi order. Please see the Introduction to this volume for more detail.

3 *Ilmu* is derived from '*ilm*, which is Arabic for 'science' or 'knowledge' and also refers to esoteric knowledge which can be embodied and manifest as 'spiritual power'. *Ilmu* can be used in a variety of ways including for healing, self-protection, invulnerability and fighting.

4 Lombok is a small island that lies to the east of Bali with a population of approximately three million. The Sasak are the dominant ethnic group. Ethnic minorities include Balinese Hindus, Arabs, Sumbawans, Javanese, Chinese Christians and Buddhists, and Bugis.

5 Wetu Telu refers to a local Sasak Islam that combines indigenous practices with Hinduism and Islam. It is practised by a minority of Sasak in the northern part of the island (see Avonius 2004; Budiwanti 2000; Cederroth 1996).

6 In Lombok, a Muslim leader or scholar is called by the pan-Malay term *tuan guru*. Sometimes the popular term *kyai* may also be used. To qualify as a *tuan guru* one is expected to spend five years or more of study in Mecca or in a reputable Islamic university in the Arab world.

7 The Qadiriyya wa Naqshbandiyya *tarekat* played a defining role in Lombok's history. Many *tarekat* masters were instrumental in overthrowing the Balinese in the revolts of the late 1800s.

8 Most people we interviewed from Pancor acknowledged that Rauhun should be consulted over all matters in the organization, but they did not acknowledge her as an unofficial leader.

9 *Slametan* and *syukuran* rituals are also known as *roahan and begawe* in Lombok. They are held for life-rites including marriage, pregnancy, birth, death, anniversaries of death and other important life-changing events (Beatty 1999; Geertz 1960; Smith 2008; Woodward 2010). There is a difference in the gendered aspects of these rituals in Java and Lombok. In Java, women are responsible for cooking the ritual food while men attend the ritual prayer; in Lombok, in addition to attending the *tahlilan* ritual prayer, selected groups of men begin cooking meat on the eve of the

ritual, often into the morning hours, and women manage rice and exchange of rice and sugar on the day of the event.

10 In Indonesian, *Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Keluarga Berencana* (PPKB).

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2 Leadership and authority

Women leading *dayah* in Aceh

Asna Husin

This chapter explores Muslim women in positions of leadership and authority in Acehnese *dayah* (a traditional Islamic boarding school for the study of the Qur'an, Hadith and other classical Islamic texts, also known as *pesantren*). It is a biographic-ethnographic analysis that examines the lives and experiences of two contemporary female *dayah* founders and their rise to leadership as they studied in male-led *dayah*. In doing so, the chapter reveals the dynamic relations between female and male leaders and the important role of leaders' wives and daughters in *dayah*. The chapter includes an overview of the development of the *dayah* institution from its historical inception to its contemporary significance in providing religious education for the masses, an examination of the role of women under male-*dayah* leadership based on the narratives of the two female leaders, and current activities of these women as teachers and leaders in their respective *dayah* and communities to reveal the fluidity of their positions in a male-dominated *dayah* culture.

Dayah history and development

The Acehnese name *dayah* derives from the Arabic *zawiyah* (study corner or lodge), and today denotes a privately established and funded Islamic boarding school.[1] It is said to refer originally to a corner in the Prophet's mosque in Madinah where the Prophet Muhammad taught his companions in the early years of his prophetic mission in that city (Amiruddin n.d.; Haspy 1987: 7). As Islam expanded, the use of mosques and their corner spaces as teaching sites continued to meet the need for religious education. From the tenth century *zawiyah* became associated with Sufis, who utilized the place as both a temporary living court and a learning centre or lodge. One such *zawiyah* was the Hilaliyyah Zawiyah in Aleppo, Syria, constructed in 1790 to accommodate the mausoleum for Shaykh Muhammad Hilal Ram Hamdani. It is probable that *zawiyah* were introduced into Aceh during the early introduction of Islam to the region in the ninth to twelfth centuries, and the name became transformed in local rendering as *dayah*. Though the name *pesantren* was utilized by many of the newly founded *dayah* in the 1980s and early 1990s, the re-emergence of religious, cultural and political awareness among

Acehnese intellectuals and religious elites from the late 1990s onwards led to the reappropriation of this more Islamic and indigenous term.[2] Currently, almost all private Islamic boarding schools in Aceh describe themselves as *dayah*, even though their legal foundation documents might have been drawn up using the term *pesantren*.

The *dayah* or *pesantren* is held to represent the oldest continuously existing learning institution in Aceh and throughout the Muslim Southeast Asia region. According to the prominent Acehnese historian, Ali Hasjmy (1980), the first known centre of Islamic learning in the region was Dayah Cot Kala in East Aceh, founded sometime in the ninth century, having teachers from Arab lands, Persia and India. The alumni of this *dayah* are thought to have contributed to the emergence of other *dayah* in various Islamic kingdoms across Aceh and Sumatra, including the Islamic Sultanates of Peureulak, Samudra Pasai, Banua, Lingga and Indra Jaya (Departemen Agama 1993; Hasjmy 1997; Shabri *et al*. 2007). In the thirteenth century, the famous Dayah Kan'an was founded in Aceh Besar by Shaykh 'Abdallah Kan'an, a merchant and missionary of Palestinian lineage. As Islamic learning centres, *dayah* spread along with the wider reach of Islam into Aceh and throughout the region, and by the era of Dutch arrival in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries every area in the Sultanate of Aceh had a *dayah* associated with an *ulama* (Muslim scholar). Abd al-Rauf al-Sinkili, who served Aceh's four Sultanahs for thirty-two years as their *Qadi Malik al-Adil* (a scholar who was responsible not only for religious life in the Sultanate but also for maintaining the court's sociopolitical equilibrium) (Halimi 2008: 314–16; Hasjmy 1983: 119–20), along with his disciple Daud al-Jawi al-Rumi, founded a *dayah* in Banda Aceh (Azra 2004: 86).[3] During the nineteenth century Dayah Teungku Chiek Di Tiro in Pidie, Dayah Teungku Chiek Kuta Karang in North Aceh and Dayah Tanoh Abee in Aceh Besar were some of the most well-recognized learning institutions in Aceh. In addition to functioning as learning centres, the *dayah* during this era also operated as a base for political resistance against Dutch encroachments, since many *dayah* founders or leaders were at the same time resistance fighters and revolutionary leaders against foreign oppression (Aceh Traffic 2011; Sufi 2008).

The *dayah* was the sole educational institution not only in Aceh, but in other Muslim societies throughout the region as well, until the introduction of the modern school (In. *sekolah*) by the Dutch in the early twentieth century. Some of the most significant *dayah* of this period were Dayah Krung Kale founded by Teungku Hasan Krung Kale (1883–1973) and Dayah Lam Diran by Teungku Fakinah in Aceh Besar, Dayah Meunasah Meucap by Teungku Abdurrahman Meunasah Meucap (1897–1949) in North Aceh, and Dayah Ujong Rimba by Teungku Abdullah Ujong Rimba (1900–59) in Pidie. The introduction of a European-style educational system forced the *ulama* to review and modernize *dayah* education, and a combination of the two systems was manifested in the adoption of the *madrasah* system (as modern Islamic schools) (Sufi 2009), in contrast to the *sekolah*, as a religiously neutral learning institution.[4]

The call by *ulama* for modernization of *dayah* implies that this learning institution could no longer meet the demands of the new era. One reason can be related to the *dayah* curriculum, which focused exclusively on religious subjects at the expense of the pragmatic or general sciences (*pengetahuan umum*) (Jailani 2010; Sufi 2009). Thus, modernization of Muslim education through the creation of the *madrasah* was an attempt at advancing a new generation of educated Muslims who possessed both religious and secular knowledge in order to meet the needs at that time (Sufi 2009). Since its introduction, the Islamic school or *madrasah* seemed to adjust to the social reality driven by the government, but the *dayah* fell into the trap of over-emphasizing certain religious subjects, and remains in a continuing struggle to improve. Most *dayah* leaders realize the importance of transformation in order to meet the challenge of the modern era, and therefore they are willing to subscribe to positive improvement even though it is a very slow process.

Dayah continue to evolve and adjust to the social and religious requirements of their surrounding communities, mainly because the existence within some *dayah* communities of a certain impetus for change, especially among a younger generation of leaders and the long history of teaching certain advanced and comprehensive topics that included both Islamic and general sciences. This includes the teaching of philosophy, logic, and the natural sciences, humanities and even technical skills. A holistic approach to teaching was demonstrated by certain *dayah* in Aceh even after their decline – Dayah Teungku Chiek Di Pasi in Pidie may serve as an example. Teungku Chiek Di Pasi in the eighteenth century taught in his *dayah* ways to improve agriculture and mobilized his students and community to build irrigation and water channels 40 kilometres long in order to support farming and to improve the quality of farmers' lives (Hardiansyah 2010: 24). His was an important heroic act of development for his time, remembered for generations to come. Therefore, despite the evident decline in *dayah* education, it continues to be both empowering and liberating, especially those led by younger leaders and women, as we will see below.

Women in male-led *dayah*

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, several prominent women *ulama* (or *teungku inong*, Aceh. female religious scholar) played major roles in developing Islamic education in the *dayah*, including Teungku Fakinah (1856–1938), who founded and taught at Dayah Lam Diran in Aceh Besar. Teungku Fakinah is also believed to have established another *dayah* during her exile by the Dutch colonials in Tangse (Pidie) in a village known as Blang Peuneuluen, after the fall of the area she helped defend. Another outstanding figure was Teungku Cutpo Fatimah (d. 1912), who promoted education as the daughter of the famous Teungku Chiek Mata Ie. Both Teungku Fakinah and Teungku Cutpo Fatimah were famous heroines of Aceh who led local regiments to defend their homeland from brutal Dutch encroachments. These two *teungku* are

today better remembered for their political and revolutionary engagements than for their important educational endeavours.

Women continue to play important roles in the development of Islamic boarding schools in Aceh. A very conservative estimate is that there are more than 700 *dayah* or *pesantren* in the province and that they provide education for more than 100,000 children and young adults, which is around 13 per cent of the student population. Even though a large majority of these *dayah* were founded and are presided over by male *ulama* (Aceh. *teungku agam*), women are nevertheless important because they maintain the balance in the dynamics of male–female relations in gender segregated religious settings. The role of women can be best appreciated when one looks at the fact that a sizable number of the students in these Islamic boarding schools are female. Though the data are not very precise, it may be asserted that, unlike in other parts of Indonesia, in Aceh the majority of *dayah* students are male, comprising between 55 to 65 per cent of the overall *dayah* student population. However, when one distinguishes between the *dayah salafi* (traditional *dayah*) and the *dayah terpadu* (modern *dayah*), one gains a different picture. Male students then comprise between 55 to 70 per cent of the student population in the *dayah salafi*, while female students comprise 55 to 70 per cent in the *dayah terpadu*. More research remains to be carried out on these religious boarding schools and gender specificities. Women's engagement in the *dayah* can also be viewed from another angle. The wives (known by Acehnese honourable titles such as Mi, Mi Nyak or Teungku Nyak) and daughters of *teungku* interact with female students by offering guidance and moral insights on behalf of their husbands or fathers as leader. In addition, many *teungku* in Aceh entrust female students with responsibility, especially in the management and leadership of their schools. Furthermore, several *dayah* were founded by and are led by women, demonstrating the responsibility of female religious leaders in safeguarding values and promoting positive change within Aceh's *dayah* culture and its larger social context.

Women comprise approximately 1.5 to 2 per cent of *dayah* leadership in Aceh at present, for there are only ten or fifteen women among the 700 *dayah* leaders. However, an overwhelming majority of the popular *balee beuets* (afternoon or evening classes for the study of the Qur'an and principles of religion for younger children) are run by women. These fall outside the *dayah* category and thus outside the purview of this chapter. To understand gender disparity in the *dayah* settings, one needs to take into account categorizations of *dayah*, such as those of *pesantren* in Java and other places across the region. As mentioned earlier, there are two types of *dayah*: *salafi* and *terpadu*. The former, *dayah salafi*, teaches religious and Islamic traditional sciences almost exclusively and initially forbade students to attend modern schools (such as *sekolah* or *madrasah*). It uses mostly Jawi (Malay language written in Arabic script) or Arabic classical texts and offers boarding facilities for students (like a *pesantren*). The *dayah terpadu* contrasts by offering modern *madrasah* education

(with a government curriculum) in combination with religious sciences as part of the *dayah* curriculum. In fact, many *dayah terpadu* operate a *sekolah* or *madrasah* in their *dayah* compounds. In both types of *dayah* a gender imbalance occurs, because higher-level classes in male-led *dayah* are taught by men. Male teachers teach both male and female students, while female teachers are assigned to instruct female students with a few exceptions.

In contrast, most teachers in the lower-level classes are women and they teach both boy and girl students. The second feature to note is that more than 50 per cent of *dayah terpadu* students are female. But, *dayah terpadu* consist of only 35 per cent of the entire *dayah* in Aceh, and the rest are either *dayah salafi* or *dayah* that admit male students exclusively. A very small number of *dayah* admit female students solely and one of these is Dayah Diniyyah Fathimiyyah in Pidie, led by Teungku Fatimah Cut. Contrary to *dayah terpadu*, only one third of the *dayah salafi* students are female, but their numbers shrink further within the higher-level classes, with the result that fewer women actually complete advanced courses. This is clearly one explanation for the dearth of women in *dayah* leadership. Yet, among those few who do complete their classes, rarely do they establish their own *dayah* by following the old tradition of disseminating knowledge by founding one's own learning institution. The two women interviewed here are among those very few, and it is through their eyes that I explore the dynamics of gender relations in a predominantly male-constructed *dayah* culture.

Women leaders

The Muslim women examined in this chapter are from two different geographical areas. Ummi Hanisah is from Southwest Central Aceh and Teungku Rahimun is from Northeast Coastal Aceh. These two leaders occupy distinct positions in the political landscape of Aceh; the former is a member, and was an unelected candidate, of the local political party Partai Aceh; and the latter is politically neutral. Ummi Hanisah can be described as a revolutionary, while Teungku Rahimun demonstrates a calm characteristic; yet both are rigorous in the pursuit of their religio-intellectual and gender-social objectives. Ummi Hanisah studied continuously in one *dayah* from the beginning of her *dayah* education, experiencing three different *dayah* leaders during her nine years of study. Teungku Rahimun studied at two different *dayah*, one in the north and the other in the south of Aceh, where the two women met and formed a strong partnership. Although both founded and lead *dayah salafi*s in accordance with their respective *dayah* education, their *dayah* are slightly different. Ummi Hanisah's Diniyyah Darussalam is similar to a *dayah terpadu*, for she has established a *madrasah* in her *dayah* compound offering students the opportunity to acquire a combined religious and secular education. In contrast, Teungku Rahimun's Dayah Ar-Rahmah remains purely *salafi*, where boarding students do not receive a modern education, although many of her non-boarding students who study at her *dayah* during the day are

pupils of different schools or *madrasah*. In this way, her *dayah* is not purely *salafi*.

Ummi Hanisah

Ummi Hanisah comes from a family of revolutionary fighters and became interested in becoming a *teungku* at an early age.[5] After finishing her religious and formal primary and secondary education in her village in West Aceh, she went on travel in search of religious knowledge by enrolling in the Dayah Darussalam, Labuhan Haji, South Aceh. This *dayah salafi* was, and still is, one of the most famous *dayah* in Aceh, with over 1,500 male and female pupils, and is led by a notable *ulama* family, the Wali family. When she arrived in the *dayah* in 1988 at the age of 18, she was admitted to the *dayah puteri* (female branch) at the primary (*ibtidai*) level, as opposed to secondary (*thanawi*) or advanced, equal to high school level (*'ali*). The *dayah* at that time was under the leadership of the late Teungku Nasir Wali. Hanisah studied hard and learned mostly from female teachers in the first two years, and occasionally had a chance to listen to the Teungku as he gave public lectures in the *dayah* mosque or in the local community. She was also selected to be the head of her dormitory and became a teacher in her third year of residency. As her desire to learn more from the leader grew, she decided to stay on during her long holidays and entered the inner circle of the Teungku family, assisting them as a treasurer for the *dayah*, and became part of the family. She said, 'I learned a great deal from Abu Nasir in this way and became close to Ummi [his wife] and his young children.' When the Teungku moved away to establish his own *dayah*, his older brother Teungku Mawardi Wali replaced him as leader.

Teungku Mawardi is one of the most important figures in Ummi Hanisah's *dayah* life. She explained, 'He is a very open-minded leader with a prudent wife and three intelligent young daughters who were all active in the *dayah*. His first daughter, who was in a high school [*sekolah*] at the time, was my role model even though she was younger than me.' In addition to studying in a public school, his daughter was also a teacher and a student in the *dayah* and, Ummi Hanisah continued, 'We often studied together and the Abu treated us equally as if I was one of his own daughters.' By this time, Ummi Hanisah was known as 'Teungku Meulaboh', named after her hometown, and was assigned to teach primary and secondary students.[6] Furthermore, she had been entrusted to represent the Teungku in his absence in the day-to-day management of the *dayah*, including supervising both male and female students, arranging *tarekat* (Sufi order) meetings, managing the *dayah* business of rice paddy factories and other income-generating activities, as well as entertaining guests. It was the habit of Teungku Mawardi to spend three months a year at another *dayah* in Padang Panjang, West Sumatra, to which he later returned to lead full-time. Ummi Hanisah said, 'Teungku Mawardi treated male and female students equally and gave us the same opportunity to

progress. We had the same chance as the male students to learn from him if we wished to. We felt he even sometimes paid more attention to us women and encouraged us to excel beyond our initial expectation.' By this time Teungku Rahimun had arrived to continue her study in this *dayah* and the two became the Teungku's beloved students. Ummi Hanisah was his representative and Rahimun was her assistant.

In addition to being entrusted with managing the *dayah* during the absence of the Teungku, Ummi Hanisah was also challenged to teach students of higher classes and to read an Islamic textbook (*kitab*) called *I'anah al-Talibin* for a class of teachers. She explained that, 'Even though I had no self-confidence since I had not taught that *kitab* before, I could not say "no" to my teacher.' Realizing that the Teungku's request was not made without positive intention or without reviewing her academic ability, Ummi Hanisah accepted the challenge and taught this text to a class of students who were mostly older than her and more experienced academically. She elaborated, 'This was one of the most difficult challenges I had received from the Abu, but after this first test I could perform such academic tasks with full confidence.' Although she taught female students exclusively, she often dealt with male students and teachers in her managerial tasks, because, as Rahimun explained, 'The Teungku entrusted us increasingly when it came to the day-to-day business of the *dayah*. We were relied on because we women have pure hearts, are trustworthy, responsible and sincere.' The academic and leadership opportunities available in this Islamic boarding school enabled Ummi Hanisah to mature quickly, and by the time she left the *dayah* in 1996 she walked out full of energy and with a confident vision to found and manage her own *dayah*. Her academic experience was further enriched after she completed her Bachelor's degree in 2001 at the local college of Tarbiyah Teungku in Rondeng, Meulaboh.

Ummi Hanisah could be considered as a reformer even when she was still a student. During her student days, male teachers taught female students behind the *tabeng* (cloth screen) in order to prevent eye contact between unrelated male teachers and women pupils. However, this screen prevented teachers from knowing what transpired behind it in the female section. Ummi Hanisah observed that most female students were not learning: some were sleeping in the class, others were busy talking among themselves, and yet others left the class entirely – while the teachers on the other side of the divide were lecturing. Uneasy with what she witnessed, Ummi Hanisah continuously complained to the teachers, but none were able to make any adjustments. She finally brought the case to the head of the *dayah* – Teungku Nasir himself – to inform him of the situation. After some consideration, Teungku Nasir accepted her request and changed the *dayah* policy concerning male–female teaching relations. This alteration generated a controversy within this *dayah* community, but, as the benefits of the new policy were far greater than its perceived disadvantages, the new way prevailed. As the order for change came from the Teungku himself, nobody attempted to manipulate or politicize the situation; individuals opposed to this move expressed it

quietly in a genuinely religious manner. After a short while, the controversy subsided and the new way became the accepted norm. Teungku Rahimun, who arrived in the *dayah* after this change had occurred, observed that 'The ability to see and discuss issues with teachers during the teaching–learning process is much more rewarding for women.'

Teungku Rahimun

While Ummi Hanisah spent all of her *dayah* years in the Dayah Darussalam, Teungku Rahimun entered *dayah* education by joining a female Islamic boarding school called Dayah Puteri Muslimat in Bireuen, North Aceh, after completing high school in one of the most prestigious schools in Banda Aceh. Rahimun graduated from Sekolah Menengah Atas (SMA) 3, Banda Aceh, in 1988. Coming from a military and business-oriented family, and wishing to become a *teungku*, was challenging. Inspired by her female village religious teacher, Teungku Jeumala, Rahimun developed in herself a strong sense of responsibility and desire to become a religious scholar. When she told her family about her plan, they dismissed it automatically, viewing it as a young child's temporary wish. In spite of her persistence, her parents enrolled Rahimun in secondary school, and then high school. While in school Rahimun continued to express her wish, and as a demonstration of her seriousness she opened a *balee beuet* for village children in her own home. By this time she had already moved to her father's village in Aceh Besar while she studied in a high school in Banda Aceh. She maintained her relations with Teungku Jeumala and visited her occasionally during the holidays.

Upon completing high school in 1988, Rahimun's parents finally agreed to her aspiration and she was enrolled in the Dayah Puteri Muslimat in Samalanga, Bireuen. This was the same *dayah* that her female village teacher Teungku Jeumala had studied at, and was led by Teungku Nuruzzahri, best known as Waled Nu.[7] Rahimun took to heart this opportunity to study in a *dayah* and she learned diligently. She even brought twelve other girls from her village to study in the same *dayah* a year later, and became the leader of her class. Due to her leadership skills and academic achievement Rahimun became a trusted student of Waled Nu, and assumed the title 'Teungku Bilek' (referring to *dayah* students' living quarters). The young *teungku* was also given the task of teaching her peers in the absence of their regular teachers. Like Ummi Hanisah at Dayah Darussalam, Teungku Rahimun took every opportunity to learn directly from Waled Nu, and often stayed in the *dayah* during the holidays in order to gain access to the leader's inner family circle. She became close to Waled Nu's wife. She explained, 'I learned from Bunda (In. literally, 'mother' or 'aunt') as much as from the Waled, for she was a great *ulama*[8] herself. I also learned from her about the commitment to family, endurance in hardship and wisdom behind all events. She was truly the bedrock of the Waled and all of us children.' After two and a half years in this girls-only *dayah*, Teungku Rahimun wanted to move to Dayah Darusslam in

South Aceh. Waled Nu encouraged her to stay, but due to her persistence, he finally blessed her move.

The towns of Salamanga and Labuhan Haji in Aceh are both famous for *dayah* education. Samalanga in North Aceh is home to a number of *dayah*, including the famous Dayah Mudi Mesra, which has more than 3,000 students. Similarly, Labuhan Haji in South Aceh is also home to a number of *dayah*, the most famous being Dayah Darussalam founded by Abuya Shaykh Muda Wali al-Khalidi. Of those choices, Teungku Rahimun selected the latter for several reasons. As she explained, 'I had heard and learned a great deal about the Dayah Darussalam through its alumni who came from Aceh Besar, and I was impressed by their academic and spiritual qualifications.' Teungku Rahimun was also encouraged by the great name of its founder and his children, all of whom became *ulama*. In addition, she knew that many famous *ulama* of Aceh, including Abu Daud Zamzami, had graduated from Dayah Darussalam.[9]

Teungku Rahimun arrived in Labuhan Haji in 1990, at which time the *dayah* was led by Teungku Mawardi. As she had reached some religious and intellectual maturity in Samalanga, Rahimun entered the new *dayah* with ease and confidence. Yet, she was placed at the primary level for six months as a placement test for her knowledge and skills before being upgraded to secondary level, and studied in this rank for two years. She was immediately embraced by the leadership and was admitted to the inner circle of the Teungku's family. Together with Ummi Hanisah, she explained, 'We became the "golden children" or the apple of Teungku Mawardi's eye.' As she had done in Dayah Puteri, she made every effort to learn directly from the Teungku through his lectures, informal classes and family gatherings, especially during holidays. She continued, 'I stayed in the Dayah, along with Hanisah even when other students returned to their villages. In this way we would have more opportunities to learn directly from Teungku Mawardi.' When he travelled, Teungku Mawardi entrusted both women to represent him. Like Ummi Hanisah, Teungku Rahimun was also given opportunities to teach her juniors and she loved it, for she said that 'Teaching forces us to actualize our knowledge and to learn more.' Rahimun also benefited from the companionship she shared with the Teungku's wife and their children.

The wife of Teungku Mawardi and their daughters were very active in the *dayah*. The young girls, especially the eldest, were students and teachers for the other pupils. They studied in school in the morning and read religious texts in the evening. Teungku Rahimum explained that 'The girls treated us like their own sisters, full of respect and love.' Similarly, Teungku's wife played a great role in the management of the *dayah*, and she also taught female classes and gave lectures in the community. She added, 'I often saw the Teungku consult his wife, Ummi [Ar. mother] before making certain decisions. The involvement of his wife in the *dayah* and in forming our characters was significant.' Rahimun continued, 'She taught us and her children to uphold the truth, to be independent and to understand the spirit of knowledge and the superiority of the heart. "Knowledge," she sometimes said, "should

function as a purification of the heart."' Teungku Rahimun considered Teungku Mawardi's wife to be a great Sufi teacher, who practised the knowledge she preached and who demonstrated the nobility of character through word and deed. She was also a 'role model' who could be considered a gender activist who never talked about gender equity, but always treated everyone with dignity, equality and respect, because she and her husband valued equality.

When Teungku Rahimun was asked to compare her experiences in Dayah Samalanga with Labuhan Haji she mentioned the following distinctions: Dayah Puteri Muslimat emphasized the importance of knowledge and intelligence (*'aql*) and challenged students on intellectual grounds, while Dayah Darussalam highlighted the necessity of knowledge with renunciation (*zuhud*) and purification of the heart. Thus, in Labuhan Haji, she said, 'We engaged in the *tarekat* of Naqshbandiyya and learned the principles of *tasawwuf* [mysticism] and interior knowledge of the heart [*'ilm al-batin*]'.[10] Dayah Samalanga was markedly Salafi and observed a radical segregation between female students and male teachers. As a result, male teachers taught women behind the curtain and female students never practised lecturing or rhetorical expression in front of male teachers. She continued, 'I think this was not the policy of the Waled because he was very flexible and open-minded. But he followed it out of respect for his father-in-law who founded the *dayah* and set up such a practice.' She further stated that 'Learning without seeing the teacher is not satisfactory.'

By contrast, Dayah Labuhan Haji embraced a reformist approach where male teachers taught female students without any curtain, and female students could practise lecturing and rhetorical expression in front of male teachers as well as fellow male students. Teungku Rahimun explained, 'We had rhetoric competition every year and both male and female students were encouraged to participate. I once received first prize.' Another distinction between the two *dayah* is that Dayah Samalanga was less structured and did not encourage student organizations or ethnic associations, while Dayah Darussalam was well structured and better organized. Here students were encouraged to form associations in order to practise leadership skills. She goes on, 'At one point I was the head of the Student Association of Aceh Besar and at another point the head of our student dormitory.' Teungku Rahimun left Dayah Darussalam (at the same time Ummi Hanisah did in 1996) after six years of study to assume a mission in her village on her own terms. Hanisah and Rahimun agreed to leave the *dayah* together in order to study at a regular university following the footsteps of Teungku Mawardi's daughters, who studied at both Islamic boarding schools and regular university. This was against the common practice of the *dayah salafi* at the time when the *dayah* leaders forbade their students and children to study in a modern higher learning institution.

Women leading *dayah*

In 2001, Teungku Rahimun established Dayah Ar-Rahmah (named after herself, Rahimun, which means 'compassionate') in her father's village of

Bineh Blang (Aceh Besar), on one and a half hectares of land donated by her family. With support from her community she built several *balees* (huts) as classrooms for students to study in. Her first students were seven village children sent by their parents to study how to read the Qur'an and the basic principles of religion. Initially, they studied in her house and, as more children and young adults from nearby villages attended her classes, Teungku Rahimum began to use the *balees* and provided boarding for some girls who wanted to pursue full-time study. Her pupils were both boys and girls; some were very young and others were more mature. Supported by her husband, who acted as both secretary and manager of the *dayah*, she enlisted male and female teachers who were willing to support her mission. Understanding her struggle, neighbouring communities and well-off parents gave their *zakat* (required charitable tax) and donations in a number of forms: some gave rice during the harvest, others sent money; and others provided building materials and foodstuffs. Her sincerity and perseverance, coupled by knowledge and commitment, made her a trusted figure in the community and she became a true *teungku* as she had aspired since childhood.

Dayah Ar-Rahmah has passed the government accreditation qualifications, though is ranked as grade C.[11] In addition to the *balees*, the *dayah* now possesses a building with ten classrooms donated by a Chinese shelter organization in the aftermath of the Tsunami in December 2004. The government of Aceh has also paid for the erection of a prayer hall in the complex and provided some other minor assistance, such as some books for its library. Within the complex, the Ar-Rahmah *dayah* accommodates more than 370 students of different ages, and is supported by 22 teachers (20 females and 2 males). Of its pupils, 60 per cent are female and the remainder is male; about fifty students are studying full-time and live on campus, while the rest either come for afternoon or evening classes. All boarding and non-boarding pupils are registered and must attend the classes regularly. Most non-boarding students also study in different schools or *madrasah* in addition to attending religious instruction in the *dayah*, and a few are also students at various universities. Against the old tradition of the *dayah salafi*, Teungku Rahimun encourages her boarding students to study in regular schools if they are able to, for she herself completed her Bachelor's degree from a local Islamic university and registered for a Master's degree as an indication of her thirst for knowledge.

Teungku Rahimun is also active in local communities. She runs a number of religious instruction groups for women in different villages and is often invited to give public lectures by women's organizations. Though she has not yet been invited to give lectures to men's groups or co-ed groups in her own area, she has given public lectures to mixed audiences in East and North Aceh. She also teaches female and male university students in her *dayah*. Furthermore, Rahimun has attended a number of *dayah* meetings during which she would sometimes be the only female leader present. Teungku Rahimun reported initial 'strange looks' from her colleagues, as if she had entered the wrong place upon attending these meetings, but male colleagues

confirm that she astonished them with her ideas and knowledge. Teungku Rahimun herself acknowledged that eventually most of her male colleagues came to appreciate her contributions and recognize her as equal to them in bearing the same religious and social responsibilities. Some senior *ulama* such as Abu Daud Zamzami have also recognized her important role as a *dayah* leader and welcomed her involvement in the *ulama* organization, Consultative Council of the Ulama of Aceh. Not all male leaders are able to accept her leadership role: young male leaders in particular are not comfortable with her, but they are in a minority. She said, 'I overlook this kind of person and focus my attention instead on my work and students.'

In addition to teaching religious sciences, Ar-Rahmah *dayah* is also open to introducing new skills and contemporary needs. Teungku Rahimun has introduced her students to the dangers of drugs and intoxication, not only on religious grounds but also from the health viewpoint. She has welcomed discussions on reproductive health and taught her pupils the need to understand challenges facing young people. Moreover, her *dayah* has embraced peace education, which is important in the post-conflict era (for more on conflict in Aceh, see Srimulyani this volume). Teungku Rahimun also endorses women's active participation in social and political life. Quoting the Qur'anic and Biblical story of Queen Sheba's political leadership, she argues that 'The involvement of women in politics is necessary since women like their male counterparts are given the responsibility to bring benevolence [*rahmah*] and goodness [*kebaikan*] to others'. Many *hadith* (traditions concerning the words and acts of the Prophet Muhammad), she contends, are in support of women's social engagement and any dissenting views are in contradiction with the spirit of Islam and Prophetic practice. Here she referred to the widely reported recent controversy and debate over women's political leadership in Aceh that argued for the removal of a female subdistrict head (*camat*) from her position in Bireuen.[12] Her view on gender equality is shared by a sizable number of *ulama* in Aceh, but to have expressed it so eloquently is very unusual.

Like Teungku Rahimun, Ummi Hanisah founded Dayah Diniyyah Darusslam on a piece of land donated by a villager, during which time she was finishing her BA at a local Islamic college in her area. Together with a teaching assistant, she began operating classes for twenty boys and girls with a focus on reading the Qur'an and the basic principles of *tawhid* (oneness of God), *akhlaq* (Islamic ethics) and *'ibadah* (active worship). She explained how 'In the beginning it was a kind of *balee beuet* in a small house without any written curriculum or structured system.' As more students joined the *balee*, eventually it transformed into a Taman Pendidikan Al-Qur'an (TPA, similar to Christian Sunday School). After two years of struggle, with a new building for classrooms on the donated land, her TPA further transformed into a full-time *dayah* named Diniyyah Darussalam, with over 50 boarding students in addition to a couple of dozen other young children who came for religious instruction.[13] Her male students built their own *balees* for their living quarters out of donations they acquired from farmers at the time of harvests. In spite

of living in a war zone area, she managed to work productively and received a great deal of support from both communities as well as from GAM (Aceh Freedom Movement) leaders and the military (for more on GAM, see Srimulyani, this volume). By late 2003, her Diniyyah was accredited by the government with a B grade as more students and assistance arrived.

The *dayah* continued to grow both physically and academically. Some of the students who boarded at her *dayah* during the armed conflict were there for religious study, but also to avoid being accused of participation by either side in the conflict. As a woman, Ummi Hanisah was given leeway to do her work, since she could present herself as neutral with regard to the conflict. However, she often accepted young men who had been shot by the military and hosted them during their recovery before being sent to Jakarta or other areas of Indonesia to avoid military detention. Thus, the number of her students continued to increase. Working in the conflict zone, Ummi Hanisah often walked a very fine line in order to survive as she helped her students. When the Tsunami occurred in 2004, her *dayah* became a shelter for victims. As a result, she received assistance from some donors in the form of training. National and international non-governmental organizations such as the Indonesian Labor Union (Aspek Indonesia), Sask Finland and the United Nations Development Programme provided her *dayah* with a new building for living quarters and classrooms for both boys and girls. Offices for the school principal and teachers were also constructed, and teaching instruments and study materials were acquired. In addition to physical development, the *dayah* also improved academically. The peace education curriculum was introduced in 2004, and teaching on human rights and gender equality shortly thereafter. Computer skills and language training were also injected into the existing study plan. However, the real breakthrough for the *dayah* was the adoption of the *madrasah* system as a twin to the *dayah*, allowing students to pursue both religious and secular schooling.

All of this would have been a source of celebration for the future growth of the Dayah Diniyyah Darussalam and for Ummi Hanisah as its leader, but fate had a different plan. As already mentioned, the Diniyyah *dayah* became a shelter for young boys and girls during the conflict and in the aftermath of the Tsunami, and, in an addition to this effort, in 2006 Ummi Hanisah created a Centre for domestically abused women and girls, and extended her *dayah* to serve as their shelter. For Ummi, taking care of the weak and providing assistance to the needy, whether males or females, was an integral part of her religious and social obligations, and many in the community supported her views and activities. Her *dayah* supported several victims of domestic violence and child abuse by providing a place for them to turn to at the time of urgent need. No protest was registered towards the *dayah* for its efforts to give shelter to women until two particular cases occurred. One was the case of a girl aged 14 who was accused of stealing and claimed to have been physically abused by her grandfather and uncle. The girl was badly hurt and Ummi Hanisah provided her with shelter and further assisted her in reporting the case to the authorities. The second case was that of a 17-year-old young woman

who was raped by her father. While pregnant, she was brought to Hanisah, who protected her and made her case known to the village leadership. By accepting the girl, she was also educating her community on the need to understand crimes of abuse of women and children. Unable to accept this discourse, some village leaders accused Ummi Hanisah of shaming the village. As a result she became a source of intrigue, intimidation and verbal abuse, and some villagers threatened to burn her house and *dayah*. In the heat of the conflict, efforts of mediation failed. Ummi Hanisah was unwilling to prolong the conflict and handed over her *dayah*, packed her bags and departed. Before leaving, she gave her students and teachers a choice of staying or following her to a new location.

The *teungku* moved to Meunasah Buloh, just 1 kilometre away, and was followed by her faithful teachers and students. They settled in a former Partai Aceh office and turned it into a new Centre. With the exception of the *dayah* name and a few loyal colleagues and pupils, Hanisah restarted from scratch. Support from the political establishment of Partai Aceh and local communities, as well as those who believed in her, aided Ummi Hanisah to pick up the pieces and begin developing her new *dayah* complex. She received financial support from the Bupati (district head), her community and the national electricity company to purchase 500 square metres of land for her new Centre. Ummi Hanisah also received four knock-down Tsunami barracks as living quarters for her students. It took her some time to regain momentum, and eventually more students and teachers returned to her and new ones joined, and, with a new two-storey building in the process of completion, the Diniyyah *dayah* slowly exhibited a new spirit of vibrancy. Currently (2012–) the *dayah* hosts over thirty-five boarding students (93 per cent female and 7 per cent male), with a few dozen pupils attending afternoon or night classes. Ummi Hanisah is supported by twelve teachers (ten female and two male), and continues to provide shelter for battered women and orphaned children. Aside from her *dayah* work, Hanisah leads women-only sermons in a number of villages and gives public lectures to other groups of women. Having since left politics to concentrate on her *dayah* work, she recently started the All West Aceh Ulama Forum and assumed its leadership and has become an adviser to the Aceh Barat Youth Association. The latter two groups function as venues where she has opportunities to give lectures to both males and females.

Conclusion

The experiences of Teungku Rahimun and Ummi Hanisah are similar and yet are different in their responses to the religious and social requirements of their respective societies. Power and authority are part of a negotiated process that takes place in a complex system of interactions between the *dayah* leaders, students and members of their families. Students are in need of actualizing themselves in order to progress, while *dayah* leaders are in need of students'

assistance and free services for the better management of their institutions. Unlike modern institutions, the *dayah* does not possess a well-structured bureaucracy, but instead operates on a fluid system which allows everyone willing to contribute. The experiences of Ummi Hanisah and Teungku Rahimun, both as students and leaders, also suggest that principles of gender complementarity in *dayah* may operate as a unifying factor bringing men and women together in the spirit of partnership, provided that they operate for the same dignified common aspirations and higher aims. Religion and spirituality are very powerful foundations for the knowledge process that unites male *dayah* leaders and their female students. Likewise, the women's efforts to claim human rights and to promote gender justice are manifested by their actions rather than mere discursive debates. The lives of these two female leaders highlight the importance of the force of personality and merit of persistence, which can effect unexpected changes in reality, even in a conservative *pesantren* culture and parochial family tradition. Finally, the *teungku*s' narratives reinforce the cherished conviction that religiosity and spirituality are basic needs which continue to flourish in urban and rural Acehnese communities.

Although women leaders and teachers are assuming more prominent roles in the male-dominated *dayah* system, their progress is very slow. It therefore makes sense to interpret the *dayah* world in a way that demonstrates the partnership between men and women, as in the case of Teungku Mawardi's leadership with his wife in their co-directing of Dayah Darussalam in Labuhan Haji. It must also be acknowledged that particular Acehnese histories and experiences shed light on understandings about gender cooperation and mutuality in religious education. The model of the Sultanahs of the past continues to resonate at a deep level in the psyches of people, as does the heroic activity of women in resistance against colonial oppression. This legacy deserves to be explored more deeply, and lessons drawn from it made to enliven and reimagine gender relations in the special arena of religious education.

Notes

1 Similar learning institutions have different names, including *pesantren* in Java and Kalimantan, as well as *surau* in West Sumatra, and *pondok* in other regions of Southeast Asia. In Aceh it is also called *rangkang* (hut).
2 Two factors may explain the widespread adoption of the name *pesantren* by Acehnese *ulama*: one religious and the other political. The recent process of Islamization of Indonesia centred on Java provided a religious factor leading to the Acehnese appreciation of vibrant *pesantren* culture and the adoption of this name. A second reason is that of the political grip during the Suharto regime, with its tendency to unify Indonesia's multiple cultures under the umbrella of Javanese symbols.
3 Four successive *ulama*-supported Sultanahs ruled over Aceh for fifty-nine consecutive years, during 1641–99 CE, constituting a unique record of female leadership in Aceh; al-Sinkili was Chief Mufti during the thirty-two-year reign of these Sultanahs.
4 *Madrasah* in Indonesia was initially a community and an *ulama*-supported school, but was later nationalized by the government to become the Islamic public school

administered by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, as opposed to the *sekolah* run by the Ministry of National Education. *Dayah* or *pesantren* remain community- or *ulama*-supported boarding schools. For the nature of traditional *madrasah* in central Islamic lands in earlier periods, consult the important work by George Makdisi (1981).

5 I have known Ummi Hanisah over the past seven years, as she was one of the *dayah* leaders who participated in my Ulama Peace Project since its introduction in 2003. The information for this account is drawn from my association with her, and from four lengthy telephone interviews conducted in December 2010 and January 2011.

6 It is a common practice in the *dayah* that students at advanced levels teach their juniors, and in this sense they are actually both students and teachers.

7 Waled Nu is an influential *ulama* in North Aceh and is currently the head of Nahdlatul Ulama (the largest Islamic organization in Indonesia) in the province. After leaving the all-female Islamic boarding school Dayah Puteri Muslimat to the care of his son Amrullah, he established yet another *dayah salafi*, Ummul Aiman, which was then exclusively for male students. This *dayah* has developed and now admits both boys and girls.

8 The singular of *ulama* is '*alim*. Teungku may also be referred to as *'alim*. It is not an ordination but is a title awarded on the basis of knowledge manifested both in one's character and in one's religious as well as social conduct, recognized by the community.

9 Abu M. Daud Zamzami is a highly respected and prominent *ulama* in Aceh. He founded and leads Dayah Riadhus Salihin in Aceh Besar, and is deputy head of the Consultative Council of the Ulama of Aceh (*Majelis Permusyawaratan Ulama*). Previously, he was the head of the Association of Dayah Leadership (*Inshafuddin*) and member of several government advisory bodies, including the Advisory Committee to the Governor of Aceh.

10 The Naqshbandiyya Order, founded by the great Central Asian master Baha'al-Din Naqshband in the fourteenth century, represents a widespread Sufi fraternity known for preservation of a living esoteric practice.

11 The *dayah* was founded in 2001 and only passed the government accreditation standards in 2007. Some of the accreditation requirements involve boarding students, number of teachers and pupils, permanent classrooms and other facilities.

12 See the debates on female political leadership in the provincial newspaper *Serambi Indonesia* during the month of October 2010 by a number of authors, including: Ampuh Devayan's 'Ibu Camat' (10 October); Raihana Diani's 'Perempuan Tak Boleh Memimpin?' (13 October); Nurjannah Ismail's 'Pemimpin Perempuan' (16 October); and Ummi Shakira's 'Menyoal Tafsir Kontekstual: Catatan Untuk Nurjannah Ismail' (22 October).

13 Her *dayah* was named after two famous institutions she admires and wishes to emulate. The second part of the name was taken from the name of her learning centre in Labuhan Haji. The first part was taken from the Diniyyah Puteri, Padang Panjang, West Sumatra, a place she had an opportunity to visit in 1992 as a reward for being the best student in her class at the time.

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3 Gender in contemporary Acehnese *dayah*

Moving beyond docile agency?

Eka Srimulyani

In this chapter I examine an under-researched area of *Pesantren* Studies by exploring debates about gender issues in contemporary Acehnese *dayah* (a traditional Islamic boarding school for the study of the Qur'an, Hadith and other classical Islamic texts, also known as *pesantren*).[1] Research on *dayah* mainly focuses on the formal public domain (Amiruddin 2003) – the territory of men – at the expense of the private sphere, where women play important roles and participate in religious life. Data on women's participation in the public sphere are even rarer, and consequently many accounts subtly imply that Muslim women have little substantial or active agency in public fields, particularly in relation to the religious public field where women are assumed to be marginalized.

During 2008–11, I conducted research on women's agency in *dayah* across several regions in Aceh, including Aceh Besar, Pidie Java, Bireun, and Aceh Barat Daya. I observed that new models of agency became available to women as a result of sociopolitical changes in the post-conflict and post-Tsunami period (i.e. after 2005). My analysis revealed inconsistencies in the ways Muslim women interact with Western-based gender ideologies that conservative *dayah* discourses reject. This inconsistency demonstrates how *dayah* women actively contextualize their roles in *dayah* as they negotiate with different discourses. Very little research has been conducted on how *dayah* Islamic institutions have engaged in negotiation processes with the influx of foreign gender discourses in the post-conflict and post-Tsunami era. I therefore examine how women's agency in *dayah* has changed in response to these wider social changes.

The women discussed in this chapter exercised what Saba Mahmood (2001: 2) has referred to as a form of docile agency whereby agency is 'not as a synonym for resistance to relations of domination, but as a capacity for action that historically specific relations of subordination enable and create'. This model of submissive agency can be found in women's lives in religious settings, such as mosque movements or other religious congregational groups or institutions, especially in Pakistan (Heighland 1998), Egypt (Mahmood 2005) and in Southeast Asian nations including Malaysia (Frisk 2009). The new gender discourses that penetrated post-conflict and post-Tsunami Aceh

motivated some women from *dayah* to move beyond concepts of docile agency by contesting and resisting standard *dayah* gender discourses which are centred on male-defined notions of gender. Women's ability to integrate *dayah*-taught docile agency with new forms of agency demonstrates that they are able to preserve *dayah* models of agency and at the same time accommodate social changes.

Women who formerly concentrated primarily on their *dayah* started to pursue more active roles beyond their *dayah* and religious congregational groups. Some *dayah* women leaders in Aceh have familiarized themselves with a more active model of agency through their engagement in women's rights advocacy, anti-human trafficking, peace and conflict resolution issues, and anti-domestic violence campaigns. A female *dayah* leader won the Aceh Women's Award in 2010 for her efforts in providing shelter and support for women victims of domestic violence (see Husin, this volume). In the 2009 general legislative election, some of these women stood for election, representing different national and local political parties.

What needs to be questioned is whether women's active participation in public politics has moved them beyond a form of docile agency. Initially, I assumed it had, particularly from my earlier research during 2008–9, but my conclusion was then challenged when I met with these women again during 2010–11 and learned that those who had participated in the general election in 2009 had decided not to do so again in the future, retreating from formal political life. They reasoned that it is better to concentrate on developing *dayah* instead. This chapter explores how the complex context of a post-conflict society, the implementation of *shari'ah* law and internationalization of Aceh in the post-Tsunami recovery process has affected and modified *dayah* women's roles, opening up space for them to creatively form relevant modes of agency as situational.

Reform and resistance: gender in post-conflict and post-tsunami Aceh

Aceh has undergone rapid social change since the Tsunami in December 2004 that devastated Western coastal areas, killing hundreds of thousands of people. In the aftermath of the Tsunami, Aceh entered a new phase of internationalization and recovery that focussed on peace-building aided by local and national agencies and organizations and foreign donors. The Tsunami was the catalyst that ended long-term armed conflict between the Indonesian government and the Free Aceh Movement, known as GAM (*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka*).

There were several phases of conflict in Aceh that began in the post-Indonesian independence (1945) era and ended in 2005. GAM's struggle for Aceh's independence grew out of a link with the Darul Islam rebellion, which opposed social injustices and exploitation of Aceh's natural resources by the Indonesian government (Aspinall 2009; Miller 2009). This armed conflict had devastating impacts on the socio-political life of the people in the region,

particularly during the Jaring Merah military operation launched in 1989 in which thousands of people were killed (Miller 2009: 5). During this period many women were widowed and children were orphaned, and education and development processes were also severely interrupted. Ongoing conflict continued beyond the end of the New Order government when Suharto stepped down from the presidency in 1998. At that time, conflict in Aceh entered a new phase and gained more support from the people. It was during this time that political discussions revealed issues faced by women and children as a result of conflict including gender based violence and vulnerability. Nevertheless, these issues did not gain a wider public interest and were restricted to discussions among activists in the newly emerging Aceh women's movement. Women's active resistance to armed conflict (as the first group to promote peace) was showcased at the Aceh Women's Congress held on 22 February 2000 (Kamaruzzaman 2006).

After 2005, in the post-conflict and post-Tsunami era, discourses on gender entered the public sphere as a critical part of foreign development programmes. During this period several aid relief projects and organizations introduced (Western) gender discourses to the Acehnese community, and the term 'gender', according to Afriyanty (2010: 178), became a 'buzzword'. It was a new concept that was debated, discussed and contested in different ways in workshops, seminars, informal discussions, and even to some extent at the village level through different community empowerment projects in the framework of Aceh's recovery. Understandings about gender began to change as the region responded to an influx of foreign donors, local and international non-government organizations (NGOs), and local government programmes that were working towards rebuilding Acehnese society.

The majority of foreign organizations working in Aceh during the post-Tsunami recovery process set up gender units, or at least employed a gender expert either from a local or foreign background to deal with gender issues. They promoted gender discourse derived from universal covenants such as CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women) and the Indonesian Domestic Violence Act (*Undang-Undang Anti Kekerasan dalam Rumah Tangga*). Later, a social awareness emerged about the importance of connecting those principles to local contexts, and training expanded to include sessions on gender and *shari'ah* law.

The Aceh region is known as a stronghold of Islam and this was confirmed in 2002 by the formal implementation of *shari'ah* law, which has affected the lives of Acehnese women in many ways as it seeks to control their behaviour, sexuality and morality. The *shari'ah* bylaws passed by the Aceh provincial parliament also regulate social relationships between men and women through laws that deal with adultery. The bylaws refer to the prohibition of unrelated women and men being alone in quiet places. According to some interpretations, this also limits women's mobility during the night. In the political arena, interpretations also apply to contested issues of female leadership in Islam which claim that women are unfit to rule. Although women

in Aceh have been quite active in the public sphere throughout history (Aly 1980; Hurgronje 1906; Reid 1988), the discussion on gender did not exist in Acehnese public discourse prior to the influx of foreign organizations and very few feminist activists identified how a combination of *shari'ah* and 'Acehnese-ness' (*keacehan*) affected women.

In order to address the issue of *shari'ah* Islam in the Aceh context, gender training sessions on Islam and gender were introduced that specifically focused on the context of *shari'ah* law in the post-Tsunami period. The gender training sessions on *shari'ah* did not decrease resistance to gender issues in the community in substantial ways. Some *ulama* (Muslim scholars), including those from *dayah* backgrounds, strongly criticized the gender equity and equality principles promoted by both government and non-government organizations, which had spread widely during post-conflict and post-disaster recovery. *Dayah* leaders' critiques were based on assumptions that gender is a Western concept and thus is irrelevant in an Islamic context.

In the recovery phase (between 2005 and 2008), local women's organizations mushroomed. A few of these organizations, including Mitra Sejati Perempuan Indonesia (MiSPI), Balee Syura Ureung Inong Aceh and Flower Aceh, initiated programmes that targeted women *ulama*, including those from a *dayah* background. Women *ulama*, as leaders, were critical to the programmes for the access they offered to the local community. During this time, women *ulama* from *dayah* backgrounds engaged in human rights and anti-domestic violence issues, and some of them also stood for legislative political election in April 2009.

In March 2008, the Aceh provincial government established the Office for Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (*Badan Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak*), responsible for gender mainstreaming and enhancing women's and children's welfare in Aceh. Later in that same year, women's groups in Aceh declared the Charter of Acehnese Women's Rights (*Piagam Hak-Hak Perempuan Aceh*). The charter was signed by the governor, the chair of the local Aceh parliament, the chair of the provincial *ulama* council, as well as chiefs of army and police institutions. The basic principles of the charter derive from Islamic values, human rights principles and particularly CEDAW. Local non-government organizations also took part as partners in support of international organizations such as UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women), Oxfam and GTZ (German Corporation for Technical Cooperation). In general, these organizations also referred to international references such as CEDAW, UNSCR 1325 (United Nations Security Council Resolution) and other (Western) frameworks.

A number of training and workshops on gender were held in Aceh during the recovery period and its aftermath that targeted educated people from universities and policy-makers, while others focused on the village level. Most of the participants were women, and the material taught was that of basic understandings about gender, including how to differentiate between sex as *kodrat* (divined/God given) and gender which is socially constructed.[2] There

was also visible resistance to gender discourses as evidenced in a workshop on gender mainstreaming for young *dayah* leaders and teachers held in early May 2011 in Banda Aceh. The workshop targeted a number of participants from different regions of Aceh who argued that gender is a Western concept and not a local term or tradition, and therefore should be resisted and contested in the Aceh context. Despite *dayah*-based *ulama*s' general resistance to the intensive introduction of Western notions of gender equality, this chapter shows that women from *dayah* backgrounds exercised meaningful agency in ways that promoted equality, even though they lacked knowledge about gender equity, equality and other contemporary Western concepts. There have been no studies on women in Acehnese *dayah* that focus on how gender is understood or transferred in *dayah*, unlike in Java, where studies also focus on gender in curricula and textbook content in *pesantren*. I now turn to an analysis of how gender is understood and transferred in *dayah* and *pesantren* by comparing Aceh with Java.

'*Santri ibuism*': achieved and derived power

The concepts of ascribed or derived and achieved status (Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974) can explain the position of women within the leadership of traditional educational institutions like *pesantren* and *dayah*. Both kinds of status provide women with some degree of power and related authority (see Smith, this volume; Smith and Hamdi, this volume). Socio-anthropological studies on Acehnese communities reveal the use of the terms *teungku inong* (female *ulama*) and *inong teungku* (wife of *ulama*), and that a *teungku inong* had quite a significant role in the cultural life of the community (Siegel 1969: 156–57). The concepts of achieved and derived power enable us to interpret that *teungku inong* figures receive their position through personal achievement, while *inong teungku* use a derived power model received from their husbands who have the status of *teungku* or *ulama* in the community.[3]

The latter category of derived power for *inong teungku* in the Acehnese case is similar to the position of a *nyai* in Javanese *pesantren* communities. A *nyai* can be interpreted as an *ibu* (In. 'mother') for the *santri* community. In most cases, a *nyai* has the unofficial power to act on behalf of a *kyai*, particularly when dealing with female students. As immediate family members of *kyai*, *nyai* also attain particular (derived) power or authority in the hierarchical Javanese culture and the patriarchal leadership of a *pesantren* of which the *kyai* is the central figure. Elsewhere (Srimulyani 2012), I have defined the ways in which a *nyai* lives, relates to others and thinks of herself and her own identity as a *pesantren* figure, exemplifying *santri ibuism*. Madelon Djajadiningrat-Nieuwenhuis (1987: 44) states that the concept of *ibuism* relates to women who are looking after a family, a group, a class, a company or the state, without demanding any share in power or prestige in return. Julia Suryakusuma (1996: 102) introduced the concept of 'state *ibuism*' as 'part and parcel of the bureaucratic State's effort to exercise control over Indonesian society'.

This New Order state ideology based on elite Javanese culture became the ideological macro-structure of Suharto's New Order regime, and coined a homogenous hegemonic image of womanhood and gender relations across Indonesia.

A *nyai* embodies the concept of *santri ibuism* in two respects: through derived power from the position of her husband or father and as a symbolic mother to the *pesantren* (female) pupils. However, this does not limit her mobility in the wider community. Some *nyai* have pursued their Islamic studies at various well-known Islamic universities in Indonesia. The *pesantren* welcomes and utilizes these women's resources, as qualified and skilled females are in considerable demand.

Where in Java *nyai* refers to both wives and daughters of *kyai* (Marcoes 1992), in Aceh *inong teungku* refers only to wives of *teungku.*[4] In the Javanese *pesantren* tradition, a *nyai* is also a leader, and represents the *kyai* in dealing with the female pupils in the *pesantren* (Smith 2011; Srimulyani 2008). This practice is strongly instilled in a *kyai*'s family in general. By comparison, the figures of *nyai* and *inong teungku* have different roles and expectations in the community; the community expects more from a Javanese *nyai* than the Acehnese do from an *inong teungku*, who is often referred to as *ummi*.[5] In many cases students will separately identify an *inong teungku* figure from her husband's role as a *teungku*, and some *teungku inong* resign from public religious roles after getting married to a *teungku*. It is not uncommon for *teungku inong* to come from non-*dayah* or non-*ulama* families, including those *teungku inong* who have established their own *dayah*. The fact that a *dayah* as an institution, and as its own community, does not have certain expectations of the *inong teungku* shows flexibility allowing for the emergence of women leaders from non-*dayah* backgrounds.

As in *pesantren* and other traditional Islamic learning centres in the Archipelago, *dayah* have formed strong networks amongst each other. Compared to *pesantren* in Java, endogamous marriages among *dayah* leaders' families are not widely practised in Aceh. In some cases, an *ulama dayah* will arrange a marriage between his daughter and a learned student, particularly if he has no sons who could succeed to the leadership of the *dayah*. Interestingly, these kinds of arranged marriages do not require the groom to be of *dayah* descent but, rather, emphasis is placed on ensuring a qualified suitor to continue the roles in leadership or instructional duties in the *dayah*.

Gender rules and experimenting with new gender discourses in *dayah*

Just like a traditional *pesantren*, a *dayah* is also a compound consisting of several dormitories for pupils, a place for religious instruction (*balee semebeuet*), a mosque, residences for *dayah* leaders and teachers, and other buildings. In some traditional *dayah*, the dormitories of pupils are very humble, requiring some pupils to build their own *rangkang* (hut), construct their wardrobes, stoves and other cooking facilities, while other traditional *dayah* have more

permanent dormitory buildings. Female pupils are restricted from leaving the compound, except when they return home, in which case they are picked up by a family member. Opportunities to meet with male pupils at the same *dayah* are also limited.[6]

When a girl decides to study in a *dayah*, she has to subjugate to the rules and principles of the institution. The moral education emphasized for girls always concerns the preservation of female sexuality where a strict monitoring of chastity and modesty is observed. Although women have actively contributed to the development of *dayah* education, the curriculum is still problematic in terms of gender. In general, *dayah* have responded cautiously to gender discourses, which are considered as new, and therefore take extra effort to preserve existing traditions.

It was during the post-Tsunami period that gender equity/equality principles were introduced into *dayah* institutions via programmes designed to strengthen the capacity of women *ulama*. Male *dayah* leaders also played an important role in these programmes. An example includes Teungku Faisal Ali, the leader of Dayah Mahyal Ulum al-Aziziyah, who implemented gender-related programmes in his *dayah* and the Aceh Dayah Student Association. In his public sermons he engaged with gender discourses to reconsider the public/private gender debate and even established a Women's Crisis Centre at his *dayah* in cooperation with the women's organization, Rifka An-Nisa in Yogyakarta. He continues to work with other women *dayah* leaders such as Teungku Rahimun, for instance, to provide shelter for victims of domestic violence. He tries to promote a particular gender concept based on egalitarian Islamic religious interpretations instead of adopting Western gender discourses.

Teungku Rahimun from Dayah Ar-Rahma Aceh Besar (see Husin, this volume) has also experimented with gender discourses. She is known as a moderate Muslim figure who experienced difficulties with a rigid group in her village that supported Islamist ideas about gender that confine women to the domestic sphere. Her speeches clearly indicate that she has knowledge of contemporary gender discourses which she combines with Islamic perspectives, promoting equality and gender justice in society, especially in her sermons at *majelis taklim*. Other aspects of her speeches promote the notion of balanced husband–wife relationships. She said that 'Husbands and wives have to support each other in doing domestic duties … indeed a husband will not be successful without the support of his wife.' She also actively promotes contemporary discourses on peace-building, conflict resolution and the trafficking of women.

Dayah women were able to critically assess the usefulness of the gender training for their *dayah*. In the region of Bireun, a *dayah* graduate, Teungku Nurhayati, had several opportunities to participate in gender training workshops, particularly during the post-conflict and post-Tsunami recovery periods. Nevertheless, she remained critical about the concepts she received during the training, particularly because in her understanding the gender concepts conflicted with some Islamic principles. In an interview she explained,

> I disagree with the concept of '*hak dan kewajiban*' [duties and responsibilities] promoted in some workshops and training on gender. For me this becomes absurd, and some participants of my *majelis taklim* [religious study groups] also got confused with this. I would prefer to use the term *ibadah* [religious observance] instead, so whatever a husband and wife do to support each other at home or outside is part of '*ibadah*', the participants could easily accept and absorb it.

Teungku Nurhayati transferred the broader concept of gender equality into a more local understanding by contextualizing it in religious values. As a cultural broker she communicates this idea to the community, particularly to her congregation and students. This example demonstrates that a *dayah* woman like Teungku Nurhayati is not passive and is instantly able to absorb ideas and concepts and creatively transform those into more acceptable ones for the community.

Modes of agency in *dayah*

Gender discourses in *dayah* are contested and sometimes resisted in post-conflict and post-Tsunami Aceh. Within *dayah*, women express different forms of agency ranging from traditional docile to active forms that were influenced by the gender training programmes introduced in the recovery period, especially those that focussed on strengthening women's political participation. However, despite the emphasis on politics, the foremost role of *dayah* women is that of a religious leader. Here I reveal different modes of agency and inconsistencies that women expressed in several *dayah*.

Typical forms of docile agency

From the Aceh Besar district, there are some figures widely recognized as *teungku inong dayah*, namely Teungku Lailan, Teungku Aisyah and Ummi Husna, who express typical forms of docile agency. These women are not wives or family members of *teungku* or *ulama dayah*; instead, they are either founders of *dayah* or senior figures within *dayah* learning systems. Teungku Lailan is a very knowledgeable *teungku inong* who is leader of several *majelis taklim* across villages in Aceh Besar. She has a full schedule seven days a week, delivering sermons in those *majelis taklim*, and is also a dedicated Sufi who her followers understand to be a *khalifa*[7] of *tarekat* Naqshbandiyya. It is extremely rare for a woman in Aceh (and other places in the Muslim world) to assume such a high position in a Sufi order. As part of her strong adherence to Sufistic values, she is always humble, and avoids extraverted behaviour. In most cases, Teungku Lailan refuses to be involved in public activities organized by NGOs or local government agencies, choosing to focus on her *dayah* and *majelis taklim*. When I visited her *dayah* in 2008, it was a simple and humble *dayah*, and at that time Teungku Lailan was in the rice fields. The

informants said that she worked in the rice fields to provide financial support for the *dayah*, particularly as the female students who lodged in the *dayah* came from poor families. Teungku Lailan does not require them to pay for the cost of living and studying in her *dayah*.

Teungku Lailan established the *dayah* herself – her father was not an *ulama*. She serves as an example of a *teungku inong* who achieved her own fate as an *ulama*, rather than from an ascribed status as a daughter or a wife of an *ulama*. Her effort and determination combined with her skills and knowledge of Islamic science has made her a well-respected *ulama* in the region, particularly among her *majelis taklim*'s participants. Although she is not known widely outside the Aceh Besar district, for those who know her or have participated in her *majelis taklim* she is described a charismatic *ulama*.

Another common role women assume in *dayah* is that of instructor. Teungku Aisyah, known locally as Tu Is, is another example of a knowledgeable and learned *teungku inong*, who performs instructional teaching in Dayah Ulee Titi in Aceh Besar. Like Teungku Lailan, she did not inherit her *ulama* status from her father, and at the time of my research she was also unmarried and aged in her forties, revealing the absence of derivative power from a husband. She earned her status through becoming a *santri kelana*, a wandering student moving from *dayah* to *dayah*, before settling down in Dayah Ulee Titi. Her positions at this *dayah* include teaching junior pupils, and at the same time she also teaches alongside the *dayah* leader in her own congregational class dealing with higher-level *kitab* (Islamic religious texts). Most of these students are from the medium level, which requires knowledge of *Kitab Mahalli*, a *kitab* of difficulty in the Acehnese community which only limited numbers of Islamic teachers have the capacity to teach. She has also mastered the *Kitab Tohfah* textbook – the highest level of Islamic jurisprudence in the *dayah* community. Like Teungku Lailan, she also practises Sufistic values, avoiding any publicity. She lives in a humble place in the *dayah* compound, consisting of a small quarter divided into two spaces: one for her bedroom and another for the kitchen with a soil floor.

Female *teungku* also operate *majelis taklim* for local communities. Ummi Husna from Aceh Barat Daya is an example of how both achieved and ascribed power or status can mix together with a model of *dayah* docile agency. She graduated from the well-known Dayah Mudi Mesra, the largest traditional *dayah* in Aceh at present (2012–). She is very knowledgeable in *kitab*, which she attributes to Abon Aziz Samalanga, who dedicated himself to teaching her and several other prominent pupils in a special class, which could appear to be preparation for future *dayah* leadership. She married Teungku Kamal, also a learned religious figure, who was killed during the conflict in 2001. When he was alive, they set up special training for quality students, and Ummi Husna was in charge of teaching, leading to her recognition outside of her hometown in Aceh Barat Daya, and reaching into the nearby region of Aceh Selatan. Like Teungku Lailan and Teungku Aisyah, she also avoids any public roles outside the *dayah*. She said, 'If I travel for

activities far from the *dayah*, then who will take care of this *dayah*?' Ummi Husna has an unusual *majelis taklim*. Normally, women instructors in a *majelis taklim* are confined to female-only participants, however, Ummi Husna's *majelis taklim* offers instruction for both men and women. She explained that in the beginning she felt uncomfortable teaching men and arranged for a male *teungku* to replace her. But the participants complained, and 'then the community asked that I return to teach them.' When asked if she found it difficult to teach sensitive issues to males, she said, 'It is my duty to do so, and I have to say it.'

A small number of women are also involved in leading Sufi practices and rituals. *Dayah* as social and educational institutions maintain relations with the wider community through *majelis taklim*, *tarekat*, *tawajjuh* (Sufi rituals) and other Sufi rituals like *sulok*[8] and *kalut*.[9] Some (traditional) *dayah* hold special Ramadan Sufi rituals (*sulok* or *kalut*), attracting mostly female participants. Most of these women are aged in their forties or fifties, and do not have family burdens or responsibilities such as taking care of children. During my fieldwork, I interviewed Ummi Ainiyah from Dayah Mudi Mesra of Samalanga in Bireun, a prominent figure who leads Sufistic rituals during Ramadan. Aged in her eighties, she spends entire days and nights during Ramadan in prayer, chanting, and performing other Sufistic rituals and practices. Even those who have never studied in *dayah* usually participate in *sulok* rituals at least once a year. *Sulok* literally means a spiritual way to Allah and is quite popular among Sufi groups in Aceh. The passionate participation of women in this kind of Sufi ritual practice suggests that women also possess relative high spirituality and devoutness. Devout and pious women are usually 'able to partly overcome their ideological, culturally constructed "handicap" in religious life and in society at large' (Evers-Rosander 1998: 172).

Teungku Lailan and Teungku Aisyah come from non-*dayah* leader families and demonstrate the concept of derived power. Ummi Husna's case is slightly different because, although her father is not from an *ulama* or *teungku dayah* background, she later married a *dayah* graduate with whom she founded a *dayah*. The case of Ummi Ainiyah fits the category of women who ascribe power from husbands and fathers. My observations in Aceh during 2007–11 suggest that most *dayah* women leaders come from non-inherited leadership backgrounds, and this significantly contrasts to cases of women in leadership in Javanese *pesantren*, who are more likely to inherit their leadership roles (Smith 2011; Srimulyani 2012).

The female *dayah* leaders I have discussed expressed a similar model of docile agency: they do not want to be recognized widely by the public, and restrict their activities to their *dayah* and congregational groups. Interestingly, these *dayah* women were not exposed to the various gender or women's empowerment programmes that mushroomed in Aceh during the post-conflict and post-Tsunami recovery phases. Their docility can perhaps be summed up in Ummi Ainiyah's words: 'Let Allah be the only one who knows what we have done for the *dayah* and the community.'

Agency and sociopolitical change

In addition to the models of docile agency mentioned above, there are also other forms of agency that were available to *dayah* women as a direct result of sociopolitical changes in the post-conflict and post-Tsunami period when gender training programmes boomed in Aceh. These include access to politics and support from different organizations for women's political participation. Through the examples of active *dayah* figures (but not leaders), Teungku Nurhayati (who I discussed earlier) and Teungku Siti Zalikha, I demonstrate how these active modes of agency revealed inconsistencies in women's agency. These women discontinued their engagement in the political sphere, instead deciding to return to the *dayah* world.

The 2005 peace agreement saw the transformation of ex-combatant organizations into civilian organizations; an example includes that of ex-combatant women who formed the Widow Warriors Army (*Pasukan Inong Balee*), created by an organization called LINA (*Liga Inong Aceh* – Aceh Women's League). Although Teungku Nurhayati is not an ex-combatant, and rather a *dayah* figure, she became active in LINA's training and workshop programmes that addressed gender and Islam issues. With an array of experience and knowledge she obtained from participating in training and workshops during 2005–9, she has been transformed into a female figure that is eager to learn not only religious teachings but also contemporary gender issues that concern domestic violence, trafficking, political participation and other issues. Her activities in the *dayah* are strongly supported by her husband and family.

Teungku Nurhayati's high profile also led to her active engagement in politics. She stood unsuccessfully as one of the female candidates in the April 2009 general election as a representative of a local *dayah*-backed political party, Partai Daulat Aceh. When I met her again in October 2009, she was in Banda Aceh participating in a workshop on anti-trafficking. She stands out as very active among the female *dayah* leaders who participate in workshops, training programmes and discussions. I met her again in March 2011 in Bireun, and she made it clear that she will not run for any more political elections, saying, 'I will not run for the election again, and I will only support those candidates who meet the criteria of a good leader, and to have a woman candidate for the election is a must; I willingly support other women.'[10]

Another *dayah* figure who has successfully expressed active agency is Teungku Siti Zalikha. She does not come from an *ulama* family, but her eagerness and determination have made her one of the most respected *teungku inong*s in her *dayah.* Like her female students, she dresses in a *niqab* or *chador* uniform that covers the whole body, including the face. She is currently undertaking a Master's degree in Islamic Studies at an Islamic university. She has assumed important roles in *dayah*, especially when she worked to establish a formal kindergarten and elementary school in her traditional *dayah* that previously had no formal schooling system. As an active *dayah* figure, she has participated in several internships outside of Aceh, and in the 2009

general election she stood for candidacy in the Democratic Party for the national assembly. When I visited Dayah Mudi Mesra in May 2010, some of her campaign stickers with her photo without the *niqab* were still stuck on the doors in the girls' compound at the *dayah*. She explained that the *dayah* leader supported her participation in local politics, based on the belief that more people from *dayah* backgrounds in politics are needed to promote *dayah* communities. In 2011, she was elected as the chair of Muslimat Rabitah Talibah Aceh (Women's Division of Aceh's *Dayah* Student Organization), an organization for junior *dayah* leaders and *ulama*.

She claims that she was influenced by exposure to different women's empowerment programmes during Aceh's recovery phase. She then transformed her life into being an active *dayah* woman. Nonetheless, she also faces challenges from some of her *dayah* colleagues. She explained, 'When they saw some invitation letters from several organizations addressed to me to take part in the workshop or training they said that "*Kak Siti sudah di'gender'kan* [Kak Siti has been 'gendered']".' This statement implies their negative stance towards her public activities. Despite this, she believes that such resistance will decrease once anti-gender *dayah* people witness the positive impacts of her work. She believes that the concept of gender being promoted in Aceh was resisted because of the use of Western jargon, even though the Islamic egalitarian concept promoted is similar. She said, 'The concept needs to be made more down to earth; using religious teachings on rights and duties since Islam also has this kind of concept, and of course finding an alternative to the term "gender" is necessary.' As for her participation in the political party and political election, she explained that she will withdraw from political activity in the future to pursue her dream to have her own *dayah* with a focus on women.

The cases of Teungku Nurhayati and Teungku Siti Zalikha show similar patterns of both active and inconsistent forms of agency in response to negotiations with new concepts in the *dayah* world. The two women were exposed to new concepts about gender in the post-conflict and post-Tsunami recovery phases in Aceh, which offered them several opportunities to participate in anti-trafficking, women's empowerment and political programmes, as well as an internship programme outside Aceh.

Together with other *dayah* women who also stood for election, these two *teungku* initially assumed active roles in politics. However, as I have revealed, this political enthusiasm did not continue, as they chose to instead focus full-time on their *dayah*. What is clear from these examples is that the modes of agency these women initially used have changed into new forms, which through the introduction of new knowledge and discourse have benefited their *dayah*. Women's movement into the political arena revealed an inconsistent use of agency because, when the sociopolitical context changed, they too changed back to docile forms of agency in their retreat from politics. Their entrance into and retreat from public political life does not suggest that their actions are regressive; rather, it reveals more about their ability to utilize

chances and negotiate with the sociopolitical dynamics of the region. Their inconsistent use of agency does not imply that the women are unassertive, as Mahmood (2005) has also demonstrated in her research on Egyptian women. For the women I present here, perhaps their inconsistency is part of their creative agency, indicating that they have moved beyond passive and submissive forms of expressing agency.

Conclusion

The *dayah* women observed in this research showed a range of agency and inconsistencies over time. Their cases suggest that *dayah* women actively seized opportunities to participate in the gender programmes during the post-conflict and post-Tsunami recovery periods. Some of them stepped forward into the political arena by participating in the 2009 general election, but then chose to return to the world of the *dayah* to pursue what for them is most important. With them they brought new forms of agency and knowledge, which they communicated to their communities. They demonstrated their ability to transform Western gender discourses that were debated and rejected by others into local understandings based on Islamic religious values and principles. They used their agency as cultural brokers, showing that they can move beyond passivity and docility, and that their inconsistencies are expressions of creative agency as they negotiate with public roles amidst social and political change. More importantly, this chapter has argued that Muslim women's agency in *dayah* is not typical, and not simply submissive or docile, but rather it is rich and contextual.

Notes

1 Data are taken from research during 2008–9, and from my postdoctoral research project funded by the Royal Academy of Arts and Sciences, The Netherlands (2010–12).
2 Most of the material on gender taught by different NGOs in Aceh consisted of basic gender training, gender analysis and gender strategies for action plans. The training was taught at different levels, ranging from basic to intermediate and advanced. Not all participants from the basic training course progressed to the advanced level.
3 For categories of female leadership based on 'spiritual power', see Smith, and Smith and Hamdi, both this volume.
4 *Inong* is an Acehnese term that means 'woman' or 'wife'.
5 *Ummi* is an Arabic word that means 'mother'.
6 This is typical of *pesantren* in Java and other parts of the Archipelago (see Rahayu, this volume).
7 The title for one who holds the highest authoritative position in a Sufi order.
8 *Sulok* is a type of retreat for Sufi practitioners who congregate with their Sufi leader and listen to *tausiyah* (sermons) while practising other rituals.
9 *Kalut* resembles forms of meditation where participants cover their faces with cloth so that they cannot see anything and cannot be seen by others. They do not talk, but rather practise *zikir*. For both *kalut* and *sulok*, the participants prefer to wear

white cloth. They cover their faces with white cloth or wear a white-coloured *mukena* (Muslim prayer robe for women).

10 The debate on whether a woman can be a leader became a hot issue in Bireun when the chairman of Bireun District Council declared that *shari'ah* law bans women from ruling, claiming that '*perempuan tidak boleh jadi pemimpin*' ('a woman should not be a leader'). This attracted a lot of attention in Aceh and Indonesia, as well as in the international community (see also Husin, this volume).

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Part II

Female spiritual authority in Sufi orders and mystical groups

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4 When *wahyu* comes through women

Female spiritual authority and divine revelation in mystical groups and *pesantren*-Sufi orders

Bianca J. Smith

The rich and diverse worlds of women, gender and Sufism in Indonesia remain largely unexplored by feminist ethnographers of Islam. The lack of feminist inquiry into Indonesian Sufisms can in part be attributed to variants of Anglo-Dutch orientalism that shaped readings of Islam in Indonesia for generations (Woodward 2010), and in doing so overlooked theological complexes of Sufi thought and practice embedded in communal religiosity. The patriarchal design of *pesantren* (a traditional Islamic boarding school for the study of the Qur'an, Hadith and other classical Islamic texts) and Sufi orders also facilitated readings of Islam in accordance with understandings of Arab Islams based on assumptions that women lack important roles in Islam.

A feminist ethnographic exploration of Sufism reveals that women play important roles not only in communal religious practices that integrate elements of Sufism such as pilgrimage and ritual, but also in Sufi orders attached to *pesantren*. In these worlds, notions of spiritual power and *wahyu* (divine revelation or inspiration from God or intermediary agents such as saints, angels or other spiritual beings)[2] are integral to the reproduction of knowledge and power, especially because authority and leadership succession and notions of prestige are often determined based on inheritance of these (Anderson 1972).

This chapter addresses these issues by expanding the critique to include the worlds of mystical groups that integrate Sufi elements into their practices. More particularly, I am interested in the subtleties of a (re-)Islamization[3] of gender relations germane to cultural contexts where women claim to have received *wahyu*. The chapter suggests that the increasing presence of Islamists and reformists 'surveilling' Muslims and their activities in public spheres coexists with, and is countered by, locally situated 'divine' events that subtly challenge the masculinization of spiritual power and authority in religiosity.[4] I argue that, while it is possible for a Muslim woman to inherit and acquire spiritual power, it must be qualified by male Muslim leaders, and in order to maintain her authority she and those around her must constantly negotiate with the hegemonic male-dominated religious and cultural order.

To contextualize my arguments, I draw on examples of female spiritual authority and leadership where the receipt of *wahyu* has translated into

ascribed potency and thus some form of new social status for women. In doing so, Muslim women's agentive contributions to *hakekat* (state of divine truth in Sufism) are considered by working from an ethnographic position that is grounded in a feminist anthropology that acknowledges the subalternity of unseen forces – a spiritual subalternity – in shaping anthropological analyses of cultures and the production of religio-spiritual knowledge. By a 'spiritual subalternity', I mean the *wahyu* itself which is cast as other, invalid and nonsensical for those who cannot hear, see, smell or feel it, as it competes for recognition in the hegemonic religious order.

My examination enters at the intersection of Islam (as religion), culture (as local praxis) and *wahyu* (as otherworldly, spiritual) to consider the gendered aspects of this kind of meeting by interpreting how societies negotiate with *wahyu* when it speaks through women. My reference to *wahyu* is an integration of Javanese–Islamic and Sasak–Islamic[5] understandings, and lies within the wider discursive field of Islamic practice specific to the sections of Javanese and Sasak culture which give it life. I have shown elsewhere (Smith 2011, 2012) how *ilmu* and/or *sakti* (read, spiritual power)[6] may descend bilaterally through family lineages to chosen males and females in *pesantren* and Sufi orders. Here I consider comparative examples of women who have either inherited or achieved spiritual authority based on their acquisition of *wahyu* (which sometimes may also be referred to as *ilmu*). My broader arguments are situated in two religious fields of practice, which loosely correspond to the Indonesian state construction of 'belief movements' and 'religion', and which interconnect in Islam's wider discursive fields. These are mystical groups (constructed as 'belief movements') and orthodox Islam (constructed as 'religion').

The Javanese and Sasak women who were involved in the ethnographic process that I employed in the field, whose spiritual subjectivities I present here, are practitioners of a *pesantren*-Sufi order in Java, a Sufi order attached to the Nahdlatul Wathan Islamic organization in Lombok, and the Subud and Sapta Darma Javanese mystical groups. They are a mix of educated and uneducated, spiritual orthodox Sufis, and mystics from a range of class groups in Javanese and Sasak societies. By situating women's understandings of *wahyu* as valid, the chapter raises questions about the ways we may read and interpret the relationship between gender, spirituality and Sufism in environments under Muslim surveillance, and the negotiations that take place in this kind of social order. The narratives indicate that women possess important spiritual roles in Indonesia's Muslim, Sufi and mystical cultures, but have been largely invisible in the male production of knowledge in anthropological and historical accounts of Indonesia.

Reinterpreting the masculinization of spiritual power

Very little ethnography has been produced about spiritual power since Shelly Errington (1990: 46) wrote of 'spiritual potency' in island Southeast Asia that 'women tend to be less successful collectors of potency than men'. She

attributed this to the low status of work practices women perform in the domestic sphere and markets, where handling money and cleaning tie them to the material realm, which hampers them from acquiring refined spiritual potency. She did state, however, that in practice women are able to acquire spiritual potency, which according to Jane Atkinson (1990) means that a woman who does so has not broken the rules but beaten the odds (Errington 1990: 40).

Errington's analysis of power can be located in the ideas in Benedict Anderson's (1972) androcentric seminal essay on the subject and does not tell us much about the role of Islam and Sufism in the configuration of spiritual power in gendered bodies. Without considering Sufi elements in the cultures of island Southeast Asia in an analysis of gender and spiritual potency, one falls short of gaining depth of understanding into the cultural complexities of power when it manifests in Muslim female bodies. Barbara Hatley (1990) attributed the strong influence of Islamic gender ideologies to the ascription of low spiritual status to women in Javenese discourses. However, women's low spiritual status in discourse contrasts with praxis where negotiations may take place in Islamic arenas such as *pesantren* or Sufi orders (Smith 2012), revealing that there are alternative ideas about gender and power that shape *pesantren* and Sufi selves.

Errington's and Hatley's arguments about female spiritual inferiority contrast with scholarship on women in Sufism from Arab, Central and South Asian cultures, who occupy a special place in the romantic literature. Their arguments reflect the unconscious marginalization of Islam and Sufism in feminist anthropological work on Indonesia, which was taken for granted until the 1990s, when more Indonesian scholars began writing in English and facilitated a change in the anthropology of Islam and gender in Indonesia (Blackburn *et al*. 2008). Scholarship on Sufism and women beyond Indonesia reveals symbols of the feminine in Sufi poetry and degrees of (limited) spiritual authority Sufi women possess in the world of mysticism (Galian 2004; Helminski 2003; Malamud 1996; Pemberton 2005; Schimmel 2003). The female Sufi mystic, Rabi'ah Al-Adawiyah, is exalted by men as well as women throughout Sufi traditions. The Prophet Muhammad relied on advice from his wives and it was Aisyah, his favourite wife, whom he trusted to memorize Allah's revelations as he verbalized them. And the famous mystic Ibn al-Arabi is said to have studied with spiritually powerful female mystics. Scholarship on the feminine in Sufism relates mostly to Arab, Central and South Asian Sufi women, leaving next to no discussion of female Sufis in the world's largest Muslim-majority nation of Indonesia.

The tradition of emphasizing the masculinization of spiritual power in Indonesia continues in more recent gender-neutral scholarship on contemporary male-dominated social groups that use various forms of spiritual power (as *ilmu*) in negotiations with gangs, criminality and security issues (MacDougall 2007; Telle 2009; Wilson 2010). Women's embodiment of spiritual power is under-represented based on cultural assumptions about the

superior potency of male power. Notions and uses of spiritual power also require further re-examination and reinterpretation in the current post-Suharto era, where the (re-)Islamization of gender confronts and negotiates with Islamist and conservative groups seeking to purify Islam based on narrow patriarchal interpretations of the Qur'an.

In Muslim Southeast Asia, spiritual power is generally referred to as *ilmu* (and/or *sakti*), taken from the Arabic '*ilm*, meaning knowledge or science, but also has mystical connotations which upon embodiment produces invulnerability, skills in healing, charming, and benevolent and malevolent magic practices. In Islamic environments, the accumulation of *ilmu* is masculinized in the body of the *kyai* (male Muslim leader), as the spiritual centre of his *pesantren* or *tarekat* (Sufi order) and as leader of his Muslim community. Although *ilmu* is most potently concentrated in the *kyai* as the centre of power in an Islamic environment, as it expands from him into the Muslim society its spread becomes ungendered, enabling males and females to utilize it for different purposes (Peletz 1996).

It is possible for a *kyai*'s *ilmu* to transfer to his wife, siblings and female and male children (usually with his authorization). The bilateral transfer of spiritual power within families often occurs in bilateral kinship systems common in Southeast Asia (Smith 2012; Smith and Hamdi, this volume). This means that wives, sisters and daughters of spiritually powerful *kyai* may also be perceived as embodiments of his power (Smith 2011). Given this, ideas about spiritual power may override normative interpretations of male-based leadership succession and authority in Islam, allowing women in a *kyai*'s family to assume degrees of spiritual authority (Smith and Hamdi, this volume; Srimulyani, this volume).

The association of a husband's spiritual potency with his wife is not restricted to *pesantren* and Sufi orders; power of potent kings and sultans is also perceived to be transferred to wives, whose graves have become important pilgrimage sites for those seeking communication with the other-world. Understandings about spiritual power are heavily rooted in culture, and in cultures of religious praxis notions of spiritual power are not necessarily gendered in the male-dominated social order, ascribing status and value – upon qualification – to female and male individuals and families who embody potent *wahyu*, *ilmu* or *sakti*. It is understood that any human is capable of acquiring spiritual power, which is moralized through *betapa* (practising meditation), *dhikr* (remembrance of God) or through other ways deemed to be black magic or the dark arts (Anderson 1972; Koentjaraningrat 1985). There are thus three major ways to acquire spiritual authority – through kinship (as inherited), self-acquired through study, or divinely inspired by *wahyu* – which then usually manifests in the body as *ilmu* (or *sakti*), producing degrees of potency in the individual.

In Indonesia there are many cases of women who claim to have received *wahyu* (although we hear of far more men than women), and this has often led to them acquiring spiritual authority in a range of context-specific situations.

Shortly, I turn to a discussion of women who have acquired degrees of spiritual authority in spiritual and religious fields, keeping in mind that these fields manoeuvre within a wider Islamic one that is constantly (re-)Islamizing.

Relevant mystical symbologies

A popular Javanese mystic (who requested anonymity) narrated that a divine feminine energy is descending to earth with the task of transforming traditional power structures signalled by natural disasters, dissolution of tradition and increased access to global knowledge. This shift in energy, he elucidated, is in part evidenced by the slow rise of women occupying important positions around the world. In Indonesia, he continued, the feminine is descending through *wahyu*, witnessed by an increasing visibility of women in politics, higher education, and in religious and spiritual leadership positions.

This mysticalized discourse is part of a religio-spiritual field in the wider Indonesian context. Mystics interpret that the Javanese ancestor Sabdo Palon, a spiritual being (*mahluk ghaib*) who was protector and adviser to Hindu-Buddhist kings of the Majapahit kingdom (1293–1478), is said to have declared that approximately 500 years after his 'spiritual departure' he would return to wreak havoc on 'religion' (read Islam) (see Hardiyanto 2006). Javanist mystics with whom I spoke during my fieldwork interpreted that the current state of religious affairs in Indonesia is symbolically the work of Sabdo Palon. According to these mystics, Sabdo Palon's return is manifest in renewed contestations about religion that have been taking shape since the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the form of Islamist groups and new religious movements (i.e. mystical movements, *aliran kebatinan*; spirituality, *spiritualitas*; and the recent controversial deviant movements, *aliran sesat*) (Howell 2005).

These contestations are part of ongoing processes of (re-)Islamization that continually reconfigure negotiations with dominant modes of Islamic practice and have led to a conceptual, legal separation of 'religion' from 'non-official religion' (belief movements). These negotiations are reflected in the literature on religion in Indonesia which for a long time was gender-neutral and male-centric (Geels 1997; Geertz 1960; Howell 2007; Stange 1986). I build on these negotiations through an ethnographic examination that brings *wahyu* and gender into my analysis. In order for my arguments to make sense, I need to explain how 'religion' and 'belief movements' are constructed in Indonesia, and the place of *wahyu* in this construction.

Wahyu, power and politics

The force of *wahyu* is a sensitive, yet acceptable phenomenon in Indonesia's orthopraxic life-ways, partly because of the doxic nature of mysticism in its pre-Islamic, Hindu-Buddhist cultures (Anderson 1972; Koentjaraningrat 1985; Stange 1986). The Islamization of Indonesia began in the 1300s as Sufi mysticism (Drewes 1985; Ricklefs 1985). Until the modernization and politicization of

religion in the twentieth century, religio-spiritual culture can be best described as unorganized 'Sufi expressions of Islam' (Howell 2004: 2) and was broadly known as *kebatinan* (mysticism). Because Indonesian cultures are religious praxis-based and the existence of unseen worlds is not questioned, *wahyu* that is qualified is considered a part of human experience: it is God-given and real. Muslims are required to believe in the unseen world which Allah created with purpose and function (as is explained in the Qur'an); hence such total knowing of these other worlds is what makes the force of revelation so significant.

A new *wahyu* has the capacity to shape and reshape discourse and significantly affect extant structures, power relations and statuses, as my ethnographic cases demonstrate. *Wahyu* has the ability to manifest within an individual various degrees of power that are highly specific and particularized to the individual's situation and position in the social and cosmological order. Notions of balls of bright light, voices, dreams and visual imagery are vehicles for *wahyu*, which then, if legitimized, endow the recipient with spiritual authority, and in doing so change some aspect of the social hierarchy or relations among them. Once *wahyu* has been embodied, it may be referred to as *ilmu* or *sakti*, and it usually (but not always) descends bilaterally from generation to generation (either before or after death), but can also shift into non-kin who are spiritually ready to implement it (in leadership succession, for example).

Mysticism – the field in which *wahyu* makes the most sense – has played an important role in Indonesian politics in the pursuit of power (Anderson 1972; Stange 1986; Woodward 2010). Aside from the ascription of *wahyu* to sultans (kings), Indonesia's first president, Sukarno, pursued mystical powers (Stange 1986), in particular through earthly pleasures in the form of women whose spiritual energy he apparently gathered to strengthen his own power. Ex-President Suharto's obsession with Javanese mysticism and power was in part rooted in the spiritual powers of his wife, popularly known as Bu Tien, whom Woodward (2010) describes as a magical woman. Many Indonesians interpret that Bu Tien possessed *wahyu*, which through sexual union was transferred to Suharto. After Bu Tien's death, Suharto's power source weakened, eventually leading to his demise and the departure of the *wahyu* (Woodward 2010). Indonesia's other presidents have also engaged in mystical practices; many Indonesian Muslims believe that Abdurrahman Wahid possessed spiritual power, which upon his death earned him a new status as a saint (as the tenth *wali songo*), and Habibie, Megawati Sukarnoputri and current President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono have also partaken in practices that connect them to the supernatural domain in the pursuit of mystical power.

In the Indonesian Constitution, 'religion' and 'belief movements' are separate domains rooted in a modern history of state–religion relations (Howell 2004; Stange 1986). In 1945, the Indonesian nation-state was declared independent from Dutch colonial intervention, an event in which Islam was instrumental to its success, placing strains on the kind of relationship the new state would have with Islam. Rejection of a *shari'ah* state resulted in the creation of a

secular-based constitution, but with the specification that citizens must believe in one God and profess one of the formally recognized six religions (Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism) (Boland 1971).

Religion–state relations changed over three major periods in modern Indonesian history, but the definition of 'religion' remained: it refers to 'religions of the book' (one of the six official monotheistic religions) and is separated from local religions and spiritualities which are grouped together as 'belief' or 'faith' movements (*aliran kebatinan/kepercayaan*) (Howell 2005; Stange 1986). In the current late reformation era, the once tight surveillance of *aliran* groups has lightened, and instead there is increased surveillance of religion, facilitating the burgeoning of new spiritual groups (Howell 2004, 2005). The laxity in surveillance of spiritual groups since Suharto's downfall in 1998, and the newly restructured democratic state, has meant that all kinds of new groups have been allowed space to emerge, and many of these groups form around claims of the leader's receipt of *wahyu*. *Wahyu* is handled differently depending on whether it emerges within a religious or *aliran* field. The careful categorization and interpretation of *wahyu* in Indonesia's Islamic cultures has, since the early twentieth century, led to the increased surveillance of individuals who receive *wahyu* by groups seeking to purify Islam.

The surveillance of *wahyu* and the criminalization of religious blasphemy

The polemics of Islam in the post-Suharto era are characterized by the threat of terrorism and the increased movement and socialization of Islamist (Salafi and Wahhabi) doctrines and groups claiming to uphold an Islamic truth at national and global levels. Through their Islamic purification projects, these groups attempt to 'surveil' *wahyu* and the individuals who claim to possess it by perceiving them as deviant. People who claim to possess *wahyu* must strategize with how they announce their 'divine' inspiration publicly, especially if it in any way transgresses normative understandings of Islam. When individuals socialize their *wahyu* publicly, they are also subjected to surveillance by the Council of Indonesian Ulama (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia*, MUI).[7] This is a controversial, conservative, orthodox organization consisting of a mix of male religious leaders/preachers/scholars/representatives from the different Islamic groups in Indonesia who work together to control/monitor Islam in the country by issuing *fatwa* (non-legally binding opinions based on Islamic legal norms). Individuals who claim to be prophets (of Islam) are declared by MUI as blasphemous and deviant (*tersesat*). For this reason, many Muslims do not publicize their receipt of *wahyu*. Recent amendments to state laws have criminalized heresy and religious blasphemy thus enhancing police powers over alternative groups. Law no. 2/2002, Article 15 states that the police 'oversee the sects/beliefs that cause dissension or threaten national unity' (CRCS Annual Report 2009: 54).

The Indonesian Constitution declares religious freedom for its citizens (Articles 28/29), but cases relating to blasphemy against religion carry a legal sentence of up to 5 years' imprisonment under the Criminal Code (Article 156). In recent times the phenomenon of *aliran sesat* (deviant movements) has brought to trial several individuals and groups on the charge of blasphemy against Islam. Two examples include Ahmad Moshaddeq, a self-proclaimed prophet of Al-Qiyadah Al-Islamiyah; and the new religion *Salamullah* (Peace of Allah), a neo-Sufi perennial group founded by ex-media personality Lia Aminuddin (Lia Eden), who is a self-professed channel of the Angel Gabriel (Howell 2005). Eden's proclamations transgressed normative Islamic theology and she was imprisoned for blasphemy against Islam. The Ahmadiyaa Muslim group has also been accused of blasphemy against Islam by acknowledging another prophet after Muhammad, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835–1908). Other Islamic groups, too, have been accused of blasphemy for performing s*holat* prayers in languages other than Arabic.

The increased surveillance of religion is not limited to Islam. In 2008, a Christian priest was accused of blasphemy for slapping his students' faces during religious instruction. Sufi orders are also monitored by a national organization which authorizes groups to ensure that spiritual authority is correctly passed on through the *silsilah* (spiritual genealogies linking *tarekat* to the Prophet Muhammad) (Haeri 1990; Smith 2011).[8] Not all *tarekat* concur with normative Sufi practices, and such groups are relatively safe when registered as belief movements rather than formal *tarekat* (Howell 2004), but this does not always prevent religious authorities from employing surveillance techniques in Sufi communities. Later in the chapter I discuss the case of a female-led *tarekat* that was classified as deviant for transgressing the order's male spiritual lineage, yet flourished despite official disapproval.

At the local level, legitimate *wahyu* is monitored by male religious leaders in the community, and cultural restraints in orthodox communities limit the role of women once the *wahyu* is made public. In such situations, women with *wahyu* are not constructed as deviant if they do not transgress normative Islam, thus enabling them the exercise of spiritual authority. Women in leadership positions are supported, tolerated or opposed depending on the community's interpretation of Islamic law. The issue of female spiritual authority and leadership in Islam continues to be debated by Muslim scholars, but popular interpretations of Islamic jurisprudence do not problematize women's leadership of community organizations, spiritual groups, government ministries and the nation's presidency, as in the case of Indonesia's first female president, Megawati Sukarnoputri (2001–4) (Van Doorn-Harder 2002; Van Wichelen 2010).

Female spiritual authority and leadership in Subud and Sapta Darma mystical groups

Claims that many of the Javanese mystical groups share Islamic-derived elements are particularly pertinent in the case of the Subud[9] mystical group and its

relationship to Sufism. I contrast Subud with Sapta Darma, which shares more elements with Hinduism than Sufism, but has had a period of female leadership and has come under attack by some radical Muslim groups and thus helps to situate the argument that *wahyu* continues to play an important role in religious society. Subud and Sapta Darma are the two most popular and largest mystical groups in Java and both have had periods of female leadership and females in positions of spiritual authority qualified by kinship (in the case of Ibu Siti Rahayu Wiryohudoyo in Subud) and asceticism (in the case of Sri Pawenang in Sapta Darma).

Many of the hundreds of mystical groups that exist in Indonesia today were formed very close to Indonesia's independence in 1945 (and some decades earlier), reinforcing theories about the rise of charismatic leaders during political upheavals and periods of sociocultural change. Contrary to predictions of religious decline in the twentieth century, these mystical groups remain active, especially in Java. The formation of mystical groups was characterized by the descent of *wahyu* into charismatic men (who attracted loyal followers). Scholarship on this early period of the formalization of mystical groups was for the most part androcentric, overlooking the important role of women in the development of these movements (Geels 1997; Geertz 1960; Mulder 1998; Stange 1986). I do not have the space to deal with this in detail here, so my analysis is limited to cases of female leadership only.

The current spiritual adviser (and informal leader) for Subud practitioners is a Muslim woman, Ibu Siti Rahayu Wiryohudoyo (b. 1928) – the eldest child of the late founder of Subud, Bapak Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo (1901–1987), otherwise known by Subud members as 'Pak Subuh' or 'Bapak'.[10] In 1925, Pak Subuh is said to have received *wahyu* in the form of a bright ball of light descending into him, from which he channelled a Javanese poem, entitled *Susila Budhi Dharma*. During this time, he also 'received' the core Subud practice known as *latihan kejiwaan* (spiritual training of the soul). Before he received this spiritual teaching, Pak Subuh had studied Sufism with several teachers, one of whom foretold his receipt of *wahyu* and subsequent great power. The strong Sufi influence on Pak Subuh's spiritual life has shaped Subud discourses and practices, which are often likened to Sufism (see Widiyanto, this volume). Subud is not a meditation, there are no rituals involved, and practitioners describe it as irreligious because it has no doctrine, allowing people of any religion or spirituality to practise it. Subud is located in the broader religious context of Javanese Islam and mysticism, and the majority of its practitioners are Muslim. It is therefore difficult to separate Subud from a more general discursive Javanese Islamic field.

The internationalization of Subud occurred relatively quickly and branches were established around the world. Pak Subuh travelled abroad frequently to spread his teachings. His tape-recorded talks have been transcribed and are available for Subud members only. His travels, talks and books assisted him in assuming the (informal) role of a 'guru' and his spiritual guidance was highly

valued by followers who sought to be near him. Pak Subuh and Subud members have established Subud community complexes in Indonesia and elsewhere that consist of houses surrounding a hall where members practise *latihan kejiwaan*.

Through the *latihan kejiwaan*, practitioners aim to refine themselves as noble human beings who live through and by God's will in the modern world. The *latihan kejiwaan* is performed in a hall in gendered segregation and women are required to wear long skirts as a symbol of their femininity. Subud gender discourse and practice requires the separation of male and female energies during spiritual training so that men and women may cultivate their respective masculine and feminine identities in a single-sex environment. The *latihan kejiwaan* functions to cleanse the soul of the practitioner and her/his ancestors. As a result, during the practice negative energies such as passions and desires are released from practitioners. There is a general understanding that male passion and desire is much stronger than women's, and therefore women are not allowed to practise *latihan kejiwaan* in a room with or after men have, because they are susceptible to the lower forces men release. The exception to this is for Ibu Rahayu in her capacity as spiritual leader.

Ibu Rahayu succeeded to the informal leadership as an adviser or spiritual head of Subud after the death of her father in 1987. Some Indonesian Subud practitioners understand that Ibu Rahayu inherited her father's *wahyu* (read *ilmu*) by drinking it from his nipple and others believe she acquired charisma and spiritual power during her ascension in 1971 (see Widiyanto, this volume). Her derived spiritual authority did not create conflict in the established leadership structure, but rather was accepted and welcomed because she declared to uphold her father's claim that Subud does not require a formal leader (see Widiyanto, this volume). She fulfils the same roles as her father did, including giving spiritual names to Subud members, answering members' letters, offering spiritual counselling and attending national and international gatherings as an honoured guest and spiritual head. During an interview I conducted with Ibu Rahayu at her Jakarta residence in 2007, she told me that, in her capacity as an informal spiritual adviser, she attempts to clarify her father's talks on Subud in order to deepen members' knowledge and understanding about the *latihan kejiwaan*.

By contrast, Sapta Darma for many years had a co-leadership consisting of the founder, Bapak Hardjosapura (who became Sri Gutama after an instruction via *wahyu* in 1955), and his appointed female co-leader, Ibu Soewartini Martodiharjo (who became Sri Pawenang after an instruction via *wahyu*). Sri Gutama received a series of *wahyu* over a three-year period, beginning with '*wahyu sujud*' in his home town in Pare, East Java, in 1952. The *wahyu* instructed him in the Sapta Darma practice of *sujud* (prayer), which male and female practitioners perform together in a hall.[11]

In the aftermath of Sri Gutama's death in 1964, Sri Pawenang derived authority as sole spiritual head of Sapta Darma until her death in 1996. Sapta Darma has had no structure for continued leadership since the death of Sri Pawenang, but rather a hierarchy of guides. Her legitimate spiritual authority was a

direct result of her potent asceticism and contrasts with Ibu Rahayu's inheritance of her father's *wahyu* (*ilmu*). Before becoming Sri Pawenang, Ibu Soewartini was working as a lawyer with a degree from Gadjah Mada University. She never married, instead choosing to pursue a mystical life. During my fieldwork with Sapta Darma practitioners in 2009, they told me that, unlike Sri Gutama, who was cremated to prevent pilgrimage (*ziyarah*) rituals at his grave, Sri Pawenang was buried in her natal village, which practitioners frequent regularly for pilgrimage, keeping her spiritual authority alive in the otherworld.

Because Subud and Sapta Darma are registered with the government as mystical groups, theoretically they do not transgress normative definitions of religion or Islam. However, in recent years Sapta Darma has been accused of deviancy by the violent group Front Pembela Islam (Islamic Defender's Front). Subud, on the other hand, is often interpreted as being Sufi or Muslim by its more critical practitioners due to the Islamicness of its discourses and its Sufi-like practices. The Muslimness of the majority of Subud practitioners, including Ibu Rahayu and the late Pak Subuh, subtly contributes to a reconfiguration of normative Muslim gender relations through a (re-)Islamization process by acknowledging female spiritual authority in a mystical field of praxis. This interpretation makes sense when situated in the wider context of Javanese bilateral spiritual kinship which acknowledges the transfer of spiritual power from fathers to daughters.

Rarely does a woman claim to receive *wahyu* and create a new religious or spiritual movement. Lia Eden and the new religion *Salamullah* is an exception, and she was prosecuted, not because of her gender, but because of the threat she posed to dominant constructions of religion. Because she spoke publicly in ways that transgressed normative Islam, Eden was tried for blasphemy against religion and imprisoned.

There are many of cases of women with *wahyu* who exercise agency and autonomy by managing how they use the *wahyu*. An example is the case of Ibu Endang, a Chinese-Javanese Catholic woman who received what she calls '*karunia*' (a gift from God), which enables her to heal, predict and mediate within a Muslim culture. Rather than using the term '*wahyu*', she strategically replaces it with '*karunia*' and does not permit a cult-like following. She strongly states that her spiritual abilities are God's work (not hers) and therefore she is not worthy of 'following'. Her case demonstrates that within a Muslim-majority culture a Chinese Catholic woman (as a minority) can maintain spiritual authority in contexts which do not challenge 'Islam' in the public sphere, despite cultural limitations placed on her by the Muslim community. The majority of her patients/clients are Muslims from a gendered cross-section of classes, educational backgrounds, ages and ethnicities.

Female spiritual authority and leadership in *pesantren* and Sufi orders

It is not only in mystical groups that women have assumed spiritual authority and leadership positions in Indonesia. Women also own and manage orthodox

pesantren, which are traditionally male domains of religious authority (Dhofier 1999; Hamdi and Smith 2012; Smith 2009, 2011, 2012; Srimulyani 2008). In special cases, women emerge as leaders of *pesantren* and *tarekat*. More commonly, women assume authoritative roles as wives, sisters or daughters of *kyai* and Sufi masters (*murshid*) by tending to the female clientele in the *pesantren* or *tarekat*. Despite women's visible and active roles in *pesantren* and *tarekat*, very little has been written about them. The lack of research on women in *pesantren* and *tarekat* is in part due to the domination of men in Sufism (and Islam), gender-neutral methodologies, secretive practices of Sufis and a lack of feminist ethnographic interest. Yet statistics indicate almost equal participation of males and females in *tarekat* (Dhofier 1999), representing a minority of approximately 10 percent of the total Muslim population.

Most *tarekat* are affiliated with the Nahdlatul Ulama organization and are usually attached to a *pesantren* under the authority of a *kyai* or *murshid*, who is ideally certified by his *tarekat*'s *silsilah*. The *tarekat* attracts ordinary people who yearn to be closer to Allah as they traverse the mystical path to realize a supreme reality. To do so requires a disciple's loyalty to her or his *murshid*, regular attendance at *tarekat* gatherings and constant remembrance of Allah through *dhikr* and prayer. While the *tarekat* is generally a part of *pesantren* culture, Sufi culture also extends beyond the *tarekat* into local cultural practices (Millie 2012; Smith 2008; Woodward 1989, 2010). As elements of Sufism have integrated into cultural practice over a 700-year period, there is a need to recognize the influence of Sufism on local practices as part of a more general Sufi praxis. Women play important roles in the reproduction of Sufi praxis which includes pilgrimage to male and female saints' graves, participation in communal feasts and mystical groups, and general understandings about life (Millie 2012; Smith 2008).

In some *pesantren* and *tarekat* environments, the embodiment of potent *wahyu* affords individuals with a status in the higher state of consciousness known as *hakekat*. In Islamic mysticism there are four stages of passage on the path to reaching supreme reality: *shari'ah*, *tarekat*, *hakekat* and *ma'rifat.* Most ordinary Muslims follow *shari'ah*, the general rules and requirements revealed in the Qur'an and Hadith. The Sufi orders are the *tarekat*, which use several methods including *dhikr*, breathing techniques and bodily movements, and intercession with deceased saints to be close to Allah. Ideally, Sufis' aim is *hakekat*, a higher level of reality and truth, which then leads into the highest level of *ma'rifat* or gnosis – a state of being achieved only by those of prophetic and saintly quality. I now turn to an examination of Sufi women in Sasak and Javanese Sufi orders who have assumed positions of spiritual authority in orthodox *pesantren* and *tarekat* because of their claims to live from *hakekat* (Subud and Sapta Darma practitioners also claim to live from a state of *hakekat*). Although some women's spiritual authority has caused conflict and contestation, not all women necessarily challenge existing power relations in the *pesantren* or *tarekat*; yet all of them to some extent (re-)Islamize gender relations in their communities by assuming authority or leadership.

Managing wahyu *in a Sufi order in Lombok*

My chapter with Saipul Hamdi (this volume) about contested Muslim female leadership in Lombok details the context for this discussion. To avoid re-narrating, I briefly summarize the context here, and ask interested readers to refer to that chapter for more detail. A significant number of Sasak Muslims identify to varying degrees with Lombok's largest local Islamic organization, Nahdlatul Wathan (estimated between 50 and 70 per cent). When the organization's spiritual leader and saint, Tuan Guru Kyai Hajji Zainuddin Abdul Madjid, known as Maulana Syeikh, died in 1997, male religious leaders claimed that his *wahyu* (*ilmu*) descended to his youngest daughter, Raehanun, qualifying her success at the election to lead the organization in 1998. This decision was opposed by her only sibling and older sister, Rauhun, and her faction, based on claims that Muslim women cannot be leaders of men, as decreed by Allah. This led to a series of violent conflicts in East Lombok over several years that redefined the community into pro-Raehanun and pro-Rauhun groups (Hamdi 2011; Hamdi and Smith 2012; Smith 2012).

In the way *tarekat* are attached to *pesantren* in Java, Lombok's Nahdlatul Wathan *pesantren* network also has an active *tarekat* of which Raehanun is now a symbolic head, providing her with spiritual authority to bless and initiate seekers (Smith and Hamdi, this volume). Nahdlatul Wathan's mystical culture has facilitated a series of *wahyu* coming through women in the community, and since the Syeikh's passing many people claim to have been mystically visited by him. These claims were largely discredited by religious leaders, except for two cases.

In Raehanun's *pesantren* community, 28-year-old Zaheera – an uneducated, illiterate co-wife of a popular preacher, claims to have received a series of *wahyu* in the form of Islamic teachings in the Arabic language via Maulana Syeikh (the Nahdlatul Wathan organization also uses the Arabic term *mubassyirat* as a reference for what in Java is generically called *wahyu*). When Zaheera told her husband about her *wahyu*, he asked to witness the events. Knowing that his wife could not speak or read Arabic, he legitimized her claims after seeing and listening to the *wahyu* as it came through her in oral mode (channelling). The *wahyu* descended on Tuesdays and Thursdays, always at the same time, for several years. Her husband documented it, and, as instructed by the deceased Syeikh, used the material in his religious sermons. Based on the Syeikh's instructions, the husband-and-wife pair claimed that they were teaching a way to *ma'rifat*: a task the Syeikh had not accomplished when he was on earth in his human form. Over several years they compiled more than ten books documenting the deceased saint's otherworldly *ilmu* (as Islamic knowledge). Local Muslim leaders (known in Lombok as *tuan guru*) loyal to Maulana Syeikh have endorsed the validity of Zaheera's *wahyu* and her husband's use of it in public sermons.

Zaheera's husband was her religious teacher when she was young. As a 14-year-old girl, Zaheera claims that she received *wahyu* in dreams from Maulana Syeikh's deceased Arab teachers in Mecca instructing her to marry

her teacher. When she was 16 years old, she told Maulana Syeikh about her dreams. To her surprise, the Syeikh revealed that her teacher had also received this instruction via *wahyu* from the deceased Arab teachers. Maulana Syeikh arranged their marriage, which he described as an arranged marriage for the struggle of Islam. The teacher's first wife accepted the marriage because it was decreed by the Syeikh as part of Islam's greater struggle. Shortly after the wedding, Maulana Syeikh died. It was not long after his death that Zaheera claims that Maulana Syeikh began conveying the *wahyu* to her for the greater good of the Nahdlatul Wathan community.

Because Zaheera's husband is a respected preacher and religious teacher in the community, the descent of Zaheera's *wahyu* was not questioned: her husband manages the *wahyu* and he is responsible for interpreting and communicating it to the wider community. Zaheera is limited in terms of spiritual authority, yet members of society believe that she has received special powers and therefore many people visit her to request healing, blessings, help, advice and names for newborn babies. Zaheera's case demonstrates how males control, manage and use a woman's *wahyu* in an orthodox *pesantren* community.

Zaheera's *wahyu* came at a time of turmoil (communal conflict as a result of the female leadership) in the *pesantren* and wider society. The *wahyu*'s new discourses (re-)Islamized the *tarekat* and surrounding community. In this process, Zaheera was attributed a new status in society which subtly challenged traditional gender roles which value male production and maintenance of knowledge. Her new status was limited and Zaheera was under surveillance by orthodox male leaders who restricted her activities to healing, advising and blessing. Under the protection of her respected husband, Zaheera did not transgress normative Islam, posed no threat to MUI or state laws about blasphemy against religion (which have little authority in Lombok) and was acknowledged by the Nahdlatul Wathan organization. Together with Raehanun, she subtly challenged dominant Muslim gender discourses that attribute more status to males in positions of spiritual authority, revealing a fine process of a (re-)Islamization of gender relations (and roles) in the society at a very local level.

Aini, an impoverished village woman, also claims to have been visited by Maulana Syeikh. Her *wahyu* came in the aftermath of the conflict with a message of peace to be delivered to the sisters, Raehanun and Rauhun, who after a decade of conflict had not reunited. The community speculated over the legitimacy of her claim, subjecting her to several tests to verify that the *wahyu* came from Maulana Syeikh. With the backing of an influential *tuan guru*, the community supported her revelations which told of Maulana Syeikh's request for his two daughters to recite Qur'anic verses together. He visited Aini in the middle of the night for several nights, explaining that he could not enter heaven because his daughters and their communities were still in conflict. He asked her to inform a particular *tuan guru* who could deliver his message to Raehanun and Rauhun. The *tuan guru* did so, and Rauhun agreed, but Raehanun refused to meet her sister, claiming that it was a conspiracy to force her into her sister's territory. She denounced the claim by saying that it was Satan, and not Maulana

Syeikh, who visited Aini. After several more visitations, Aini relinquished the *wahyu* and eventually Maualana Syeikh stopped visiting her.

Female leadership of a pesantren-*Sufi order in Java*

Like the Sasak, many Javanese are mystically oriented in Islamic theology. These mystical orientations are enmeshed in daily life and worldview, although there is far less surveillance of community Islam in Java than in Lombok, where a potent *tuan guru*-defined orthodoxy moralizes and surveils social behaviour. However, like in Lombok, the surveillance of morality and the correctness of piety in Javanese *pesantren* institutions restrict behaviour by emphasizing adherence to moral codes and ethics (*adab*). These codes, ethics and rules are enforced through the gender segregated design of the *pesantren* and *tarekat* in attempts to control sexuality based on *shari'ah* by restricting and limiting contact between males and females. Gender segregated initiations, prohibition of female eye contact with the *murshid* and the maintenance of a male leader in the continuation of the *silsilah* also act to maintain normative gender relations in accordance with *shari'ah*.

For several years, I have participated in a localized branch of a Naqshbandiyya *pesantren-tarekat* in Java that for thirty years had a female leader (1925–54) who assumed her husband's leadership after he died. This *nyai* succeeded to the leadership upon qualification from her husband, who recognized her spiritual potency. Her husband was a powerful Sufi Syeikh who established the *pesantren-tarekat* in the early 1900s. In 1925, when *bu nyai* assumed spiritual leadership and authority of this *pesantren-tarekat*, religion was unorganized and was therefore unproblematic until the state rationalization of religion in the 1950s. It was during this period that the *nyai*'s *tarekat* was denounced by the religious authorities as deviant (Smith 2011). Despite this, the female-led *tarekat* continued to flourish, because Sufi practitioners understood that the *nyai* had embodied potent *wahyu* which earned her special status in the Sufi community as a spiritual authority. The *tarekat* practises Sunni Sufism, adhering to *shari'ah* on the path to *hakekat*, and *bu nyai* was instrumental in developing the *tarekat* because she was perceived to live in a state of *hakekat*. Gender did not play a role in legitimizing *bu nyai*'s *wahyu* and only became problematic when the Islamic authorities sought to control and manage her spiritual authority.

Bu nyai's son inherited the leadership after her death in the 1950s and remained as leader until his death in the 1980s, when his son replaced him as *murshid*. The re-instalment of a man as leader of the *tarekat* corrected the transgression of the *silsilah* and restored the *tarekat*'s legitimacy with the authorities. The *nyai*'s male and female grandchildren were authorized to continue missionary activity by building their own *pesantren.* (It is not uncommon for a *kyai* to decree both male and female children as his successors. In cases where a *kyai* has several children, he may order them to build their own *pesantren* or *tarekat* in cities around Indonesia to facilitate the spread of

Islam.) The *pesantren-tarekat* complex now functions as a full-time *tarekat*, with *santri* (students) coming and going at will any day of the year (which is different from ordinary *tarekat* that function by holding regular gatherings or retreats with the *murshid*). Like in other *pesantren* and *tarekat*, deceased leaders' *wahyu* (or *ilmu*) plays a significant role in guiding the *murshid* in teaching methodologies, thus legitimizing his position in a hierarchy of powerful Sufis.

The *pesantren-tarekat* is a live-in, full-time school, and therefore requires gender segregated living quarters. The formal role of the *murshid* is to initiate new practitioners and see them upon request if there is a need, but the implementation of strict gendered segregation makes it difficult for female *santri* to acquire access to him. The initiation into the *tarekat* is held separately for men and women. The *murshid* initiates the men first and the women later at night. The women sit on the floor in rows garbed in a *mukena* (prayer robe). The new initiates sit at the front, separated by the others based on experience and how far they are on their migration from *latifah* to *latifah* (light centres in the body). The initiation is conducted in the Javanese language and introduces the history of the *tarekat*, the relationship between seekers and their *murshid*, and the methodology and ethics to be applied whilst in the confines of the *pesantren-tarekat*.

The lack of access female *santri* have to the *murshid* provides space for the *murshid*'s sister, *nyai Nisa*, to perform important duties in the *tarekat*'s female quarters. She is qualified to do so not only because she has acquired special abilities but also because she is guided by her grandmother's *wahyu*. She guides female seekers in the required practices by providing understanding to the *murshid*'s explanations acquired during the initiation. Beyond this, *nyai Nisa* engages in preaching practices to both men and women at her own *pesantren*. *Nyai Nisa* has not forgotten the criticism her grandmother received as spiritual leader and thus remains mindful of sensitivities when preaching. She explained, 'It is acceptable to challenge horizontal relations in Islam, meaning human to human, social relationships. The danger comes when people publicly challenge the "vertical" aspects, meaning the God-given decreed laws such as the issue of men as leaders of prayers, for example.' *Nyai Nisa* carefully negotiates the content of her sermons to avoid transgressing normative doctrine and practice, yet subtly introduces female-positive discourses. She continued, 'For women to be empowered, they need to become powerful leaders, to be wise, and to do this by not threatening men.' Men and women visit her *pesantren* daily to ask for blessings, advice and instructions, legitimizing her inherited spiritual potency. She remains cautious of surveillance by Muslim groups whose claims to a correct and true version of Islam fail to successfully control the descent of *wahyu*.

Conclusion

Women's mystical worlds and spiritual power have been provincial topics in the discourse on Sufism and mysticism in Indonesia. The cases I have

presented offer new methods for interpreting Sufi and mystic women in orthodox Muslim environments in Indonesia by acknowledging women's spiritual abilities and narratives as valid. I have shown how women have unfolded in fields of Javanese mysticism and Sufism, and in their confrontations with Islamist and conservative groups have maintained positions as spiritual authorities and leaders. The mystical groups are situated in a wider Islamic field of practice without explicitly challenging conservative forms of normative Islam, and yet, in subtle ways, Muslim practitioners of mystical groups contribute to wider processes of (re-)Islamization. In orthodox environments under male Muslim surveillance, women's *wahyu* contributes to a process of (re-)Islamization and reshaping of gender roles without transgressing hegemonic Muslim constructions of gender.

These findings fit with local mystical interpretations which problematize how we understand religion, because cases of women who possess and publicize *wahyu* suggest that Javanese and Sasak mystics and Sufis may value mystical instruction over patriarchal assumptions about proper gender roles based on normative interpretations of gender in *pesantren* and Sufi orders. I have come to these conclusions by implementing a feminist anthropological approach that integrates informants' worldviews and their engagements with spiritual otherworlds from which *wahyu* originates, in order to capture how Muslim women exercise spiritual authority and leadership through divine and other revelations.

Notes

1 Smith's research was funded by the Australia Endeavour Cheung Kong Awards for Postdoctoral Research in Asia and is based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted from 2006 to 2010 in Java and Lombok.

2 In the Indonesian language, *wahyu* refers to revelation or inspiration from God and other intermediary agents such as saints, angels or other spiritual beings, and is adapted from the Arabic *wahy*, which refers to revelation from God received by Prophets only. The Arabic term *ilham* is used to refer to ordinary people (non-prophets) who receive revelation, but in Indonesian popular religious culture the term *wahyu* is common parlance (among non-theologians), referring to the general receiving of revelation or inspiration. In this chapter I therefore use the term *wahyu* rather than *ilham* in order to keep in line with my informants' use of it. My usage of the term 'revelation' also refers to 'inspiration' in the form of (balls of) light, voices/sounds, bells, dreams or visual images. When Prophets (*rasul*) and non-prophetic messengers (*nabi*) receive *wahyu*, this is often documented in the form of a book (the Qur'an, for example).

3 My use of '(re-)Islamization' here refers to the ongoing engagement with and fluid (re-)interpretation of Islam by Muslims as they negotiate with constant social and cultural change.

4 Male Muslim authority is decreed by the normative yet ambiguous Qur'anic statement that men are leaders of women, which is further legitimized by particular Hadith (traditions concerning the words and acts of the Prophet Muhammad) and the Syafi'i school of law which guide the majority of Indonesian Muslims in practices of public and private piety. Alternative interpretations of this decree posit that it means 'men are partners of women'.

5 In Sasak culture, *wahyu* is also referred to as '*ilmu ghaib*', which means knowledge or power from the unseen world, where saints, angels and other spirits reside. In the Nahdlatul Wathan organization the Arabic term *mubassyirat* (revelation, inspiration) is also used to refer to *wahyu*.

6 Many people maintain a clear distinction between *ilmu* and *sakti*, but many also often use the terms interchangeably to refer to a broad form of spiritual or supernatural power. *Ilmu* is derived from '*ilm,* which is Arabic for 'science' or 'knowledge' and also refers to esoteric knowledge which can be embodied and manifest as spiritual power. This kind of *ilmu* belongs to the broad category of *kesaktian* (and *kanuragan*).

7 MUI is a quasi-governmental body. Its rulings do not have the force of law and do not represent official government positions. Some fundamentalist groups employ rhetoric that suggests the opposite. Most people pay little attention to them, especially in matters of daily life. Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama *fatwa* are of much greater social importance.

8 *Jam'iyah Ahli al-Thariqah al-Mu'tabaroh an-Nahdliyah* (JATMAN) is an executive committee of Sufi leaders who monitor and legitimize *tarekat* associated with Nahdlatul Ulama.

9 *Susila Budhi Dharma* (Subud): *Susila* refers to the character of a human being that is 'good' and 'pure' in accordance with the will of God – a true human character; *budhi* refers to a force from God that exists in all of creation; and *dharma* is a human being's total submission to the God of their understanding. If one is able to achieve these states of being, then they are 'Subud'.

10 The Indonesian title for older men; equivalent of 'Mr' and 'Father'.

11 Sapta Darma practitioners strive to fulfil the ability to wherever, with whomever, shine like the sun (Jv. *Ing ngendi bae marang sapa bae warga sapta darma kudu sumunar pindha baskara*).

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5 Reframing the gendered dimension of Islamic spirituality

Silsilah and the 'problem' of female leadership in *tarekat*

Asfa Widiyanto[1]

This chapter provides a comparative context for debates about the 'problem' of female leadership in Sufi orders (*tarekat*) in Indonesia and the Muslim world. In order to reveal the spectrum of possibilities for female leadership in *tarekat*, the chapter considers discourse on *silsilah* (spiritual genealogies linking *tarekat* to the Prophet Muhammad) and leadership in the Islamic mystical tradition more broadly, in addition to Sufi ideas underlying problems of assigning women leadership positions. I draw on examples of female leadership in Sufi orders in Javanese *pesantren* (a traditional Islamic boarding school for the study of the Qur'an, Hadith and other classical Islamic texts), with a focus on Tarekat Qadiriyya wa Naqshbandiyya (TQN) in Demak, and the Javanese mystical group Subud. The Subud movement is not a *tarekat* in the classical sense, but shares many religious and organizational features with them. The Subud movement is unique in the sense that, on the one hand it shares some concepts with *tarekat*, and on the other hand it strives to serve as an antithesis to the teachings and practices of *tarekat*. The Subud movement, which is deeply rooted in Javanese culture, is more open to female leadership than *tarekat* originating in the Middle East, indicating that the gendered dimensions of Indonesian Sufi spirituality are practised in different ways to the *tarekat* that developed elsewhere. Islam in Indonesia, in general, is easily intermingled with local tradition, and accordingly provides an interesting portrait of gender relations, which is distinct from that of the rest of the Muslim world.

Silsilah as a mode for establishing male authority

Bernd Radtke (1992) observes that Sufism should be understood, if not experientially, as a process for cultivating self-awareness, because as J. Spencer Trimingham (1971) explains, Sufis seek direct communion with God through the use of intuition and emotional faculties, involving the cultivation of mystical experiences and states (*al-maqamat wa al-ahwal al-sufiyya*). Sufis perceive and describe their experiences differently because they are often momentary and hard to describe in conventional language. Such experience is roughly comparable to an orgasm, which also happens momentarily. Accordingly, the

mystical states, particularly the highest ones, are sometimes described as 'spiritual orgasms' for Sufis.

Sufism in the Middle East emerged from a long process of reflection on the notions of perfection of religiosity (*ihsan*) and morality (*akhlaq*). The pioneers of the movement were early Muslim ascetics (*zuhhad*), pietists (*ubbad*) and devotees (*nussak*). This movement was located within the boundaries of *ihsan* and *akhlaq* discourse, which in its early phase has been referred to as 'proto-Sufism', the embryonic stage of Sufism. Sufism developed in the seventh century CE through the elaboration of concepts such as love (*hubb*), mystical stations (*maqam*) and mystical states (*hal*).

Since the time of the famous Persian scholar Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (1058–1111), Sufism influenced the Muslim world to a greater degree than other currents in Islamic thought. The Sufi orders were institutions in which modes of ritual and the relationships between disciple and master were formalized. After the twelfth century, Sufi orders such as Qadiriyya, Kubrawiyya, Syadhiliyya and Naqshbandiyya came into being. The fall of Baghdad to the Mongols in 1258 contributed to the spread of Sufi orders because members and leaders were compelled to leave the city and propagate their doctrines in many parts of the Muslim world, including Indonesia (Zulkifli 2002).

Silsilah became central to processes of maintaining and controlling spiritual authority in the eleventh century. From that time forward, descent from the Prophet has been used to establish the authority necessary to convey sacred knowledge and ritual practice (Malamud 1994). *Silsilah* formalize authority for men who legitimately belong in the chain of transmission linking them to the Prophet, and authorizing them to convey *barakah* (blessing), entitling them to bestow licence on, and initiate, male and female disciples. A Syeikh who possesses an 'unbroken' spiritual lineage is legitimized as an authentic inheritor of the spirituality of the Prophet; accordingly, he is entitled to pass on his authority to others, who are usually male.

In the *tarekat*, *silsilah* is a symbol of hierarchy. By becoming part of the *silsilah*, a person is entitled to convey spiritual teachings specific to it. Al-Khani (1977) points out that when a person enters the *silsilah* of a particular group through initiation and instillation, she or he may obtain a benefit. When she or he enters the *silsilah*, the spirits of the masters will respond and convey this to the Prophet and God. One who does not join their path is not recognized as a part of them, hence none will respond when she or he does something with the *silsilah.*

The perfect guide (*murshid kamil*) signifies the person who masters both the *tarekat* and *shari'ah* and represents the figure in whom religious and spiritual knowledge are embodied in their fullest sense. Present-day masters are linked to founders of their orders as well as to such great figures of early Islam including Abu Bakr and 'Ali ibn Abi Talib by a chain or spiritual pedigree (Netton 2000). In the *tarekat*, one cannot claim to be a master without having had a previous master or, in other words, without possessing an authoritative

silsilah. This is to some extent different from Javanese mystical tradition in movements such as Subud in which revelation or divine inspiration is deemed to be of importance, and is regarded as legitimizing the leadership of a particular person (see Smith, this volume). In Javanese mystical tradition, the founder of a mystical group (*aliran kepercayaan*) must have obtained a revelation, as well as her or his mastery of mystical teachings from previous masters (the latter is secondary).

According to some Indonesian Sufi masters, when an adherent performs a practice as taught by her or his master, she or he will be supported by the spirits of those in the *silsilah* (often termed *rijal al-silsilah*) (Al-Mannuri n.d.). It may inflict danger on people who oppose this practice. This shows us the efficacy and the power of *silsilah*, indicating the danger of what may happen if an unauthorized leader assumes the position of master, and this includes women, who, according to normative interpretations in Sufism and Islam, are not qualified to become leaders of men.

A Sufi order normally includes a range of male leaders (known as *murshid*, *syeikh* or *pir*) and disciples (known as *murid*, *akh* or *sahib*). In most Sufi orders the line of succession is through sons, if feasible. If sons are not suitable, then sons-in-law are the next best candidates. Cases in which the son of a master is not willing to assume the leadership, for instance, are regarded as a sign of the fading charisma of the family, all the more so if there is no one to succeed the master, implying that the charisma of the leader is transferable, in the fullest sense, only to his son. However, scholarship from the Muslim world reveals that women do rise to leadership and authority in Sufi orders, a topic to which I now turn.

The spectrum of possibility of female leadership

In this section I consider the spectrum of possibility of female leadership in the *tarekat*, as well as the ideas underlying the problems of assigning women a position as leader of the *tarekat*. Within the *tarekat* are a range of debated views pertaining to the possibility of female leadership including: (a) that a woman is a disciple, and not a leader; (b) that she may be a leader with the authority to teach but not initiate people into the order; (c) that she may be a leader with the authority to initiate only females into the order; and (d) that she may be a leader with full authority, meaning she may initiate both males and females into the order.

Examples referring to the last two possibilities include the case of a female sectional leader in the Tijaniyya order in Kano, Nigeria, in which the *muqaddama* (female circle leader) is entitled to induct female applicants into the order, and even to appoint other females as *muqaddama*. Before the 1930s, female involvement in the Tijaniyya appears to have been confined to normal discipleship without the possibility for spiritual authority. A visit to Kano in 1935 from a Northern African female master demonstrated the possibility for *muqaddama*, and subsequently she appointed the first Kano female *muqaddama*

in the order (Hutson 1999). The example indicates that, even within the same *tarekat*, the adherents' standpoints pertaining to the possibility of female authority are not uniform, and the lack of female Sufi leadership in a certain geographical area is at times due to the absence of a precedent and model in that area.

The presence of a female Sufi master can be likewise found in the late fourteenth century in Anatolia. This woman was a descendant of Jalal al-Din Rumi and was granted authority to initiate both male and female applicants into the Mawlawiyya order. Likewise, in fourteenth-century Damascus there is a record of the presence of a female guide who was given the authority to initiate men and women into the Suhrawardiyya order (Schimmel 1993; Küçük 2009). The case of female leadership in the Chistiyya order tells of a letter from a fifteenth-century Chisti master to his female disciple, which does not specifically mention the term '*khalifa*', which means 'leader' (suggesting that the formal appointment of female adept as a spiritual guide was a problem), but it implies that she was given the authority to initiate disciples. She was even authorized to initiate male applicants into the order in her absence or from behind a curtain (Pemberton 2006).

Some Sufi orders such as Khalwatiyya and Bektashiyya allow the participation of women in the order but do not assign offices to women (Elias 1988). In the Qadiriyya order, women have opportunities to become leaders without authorization to initiate disciples (Bop 2005). Codou Bop (2005) reveals the story of a female Sufi princess, Fatima Jahanara, who excelled in spirituality, although her master could not designate her as his successor because it was forbidden in the rules of Qadiriyya (Schimmel 1982, 1995).

In Indonesia, the Naqshbandiyya-Mazhariyya order in Madura allows for the possibility of female masters with the authority to initiate females into the order (Van Bruinessen 1998). The Naqshbandiyya-Mazhariyya, which was introduced from Mecca to Madura during the later part of nineteenth century, is one of the most widespread *tarekat* in Madura along with two other orders, Tijaniyya and Tarekat Qadiriyya wa Naqshbandiyya (TQN) (Van Bruinessen 1995). The first female master in Naqshbandiyya-Mazhariyya in Madura was Nyai Aisyah, who was appointed *murshida* at the end of nineteenth century, and was responsible for supervising the female adherents, who were mostly elderly. At this point, we can see that the recognition of female spiritual achievement in this order had been established since the introduction of this order to this region (Mulyadi 2007). The tradition of female leadership in the Naqshbandiyya-Mazhariyya has continued with the emergence of some female personages including Nyai Tobibah (d. 1995), Syarifah Fatimah and Nyai Syafi'ah. Nyai Tobibah, the granddaughter of Nyai Aisyah, was responsible for guiding the adherents in Pamekasan, Madura, whilst Syarifah Fatimah based her activities in Sumenep, Madura (Mulyadi 2007).

These female masters were active in leading the female communal ritual (*tawajjuhan* and *khatm al-khwajagan*) and in initiating female aspirants into the order. These female personages also gave advice to female adherents

pertaining to their spiritual and personal problems. It is worth remarking that Nyai Tobibah also guided male disciples and initiated male aspirants (Mulyadi 2007). Nyai Syafi'ah was initiated as *murshida* by her master, who also happened to be her husband, although she is not active in instructing the female disciples. The emergence of these female leaders is understood to be because of the large number (more than 50 per cent) of female disciples in the Sufi order (Mulyadi 2007), yet the history of the order indicates similar circumstances in other places.

The case of appointing a woman as a master in the Naqshbandiyya-Mazhariyya in Madura is not surprising when we compare it to the same order in India. The Indian master Mirza Mazhar Jan-i Janan (1699–1781), to whom the name of Naqshbandiyya-Mazhariyya is attributed, was recorded as having appointed two women as his *khalifa*, who were also entitled to initiate their own disciples (Pemberton 2006).

The Naqshbandiyya order also presents cases of female masters, including that of a Javanese woman *murshida* (d. 1954) who inherited leadership and spiritual authority from her husband in East Java, Indonesia, for thirty years (Smith 2011, and in this volume), and in Central Asia, where Mastura Khanim (d. 1523) possessed the authority to initiate both women and men into the order (Sultanova 2007).

There have been no known documented cases of authorized female leaders in Tarekat Qadiriyya wa Naqshbandiyya (TQN) in Indonesia. TQN is a Sufi order which was developed mainly by the Kalimantan scholar Ahmad Khatib ibn 'Abd al-Ghaffar Sambas (1803–75). TQN, which constitutes a synthesis of elements of the Qadiriyya and the Naqshbandiyya, is considered to be the only orthodox order that was established by a scholar from the Indonesian Archipelago. Male leaders in this order concur with normative readings of Islam and authority to conclude that female leadership is not allowed. TQN's stance on the possibility of female leadership is close to that of the Qadiriyya.

I now turn to a comparison with another spiritual organization in Java that will help us to further contextualize the 'problem' of female leadership in the *tarekat*. Although the Subud movement is not a *tarekat* in its classical sense, and from the time it was established it has served as an antithesis to the *tarekat*, it shares many organizational features with them. Some scholars (Bancroft 1981; Shah 1991), however, suppose that Subud draws its teachings and practices from Sufism. With these considerations in mind, I think it is of relevance to compare Subud with *tarekat*. The Subud movement was founded by the Javanese mystic Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo (1901–87), known as Pak Subuh, and has developed within the realm of Javanese mystical ideas (see Smith, this volume).

In the Subud movement there are a range of roles which are assigned to women, specifically:

1. the role of mother (for the founder's wives and daughter as detailed below);
2. the highest position of informal leader in the aftermath of the founder's death;

3. female spiritual helpers with the same opportunity as their male counterparts to advance their spirituality. Likewise, these female spiritual helpers possess the same authority as their male counterparts in the sense that they are entitled to induct the applicants from their respective sex into the movement.

Rumindah (d. 1936), Pak Subuh's first wife, whom he married on 9 October 1926, played a significant role in the early dissemination of Subud's core spiritual training, known as *latihan kejiwaan*. She was accordingly addressed as Ibu (In. 'mother') by Subud members. Rumindah was the first person with whom Pak Subuh shared the *latihan*, and only thereafter did he begin to share it with his male companions (Longcroft 1990: 14). Siti Sumari (d. 1971) was Pak Subuh's second wife, whom he married on 15 November 1941, a few years after the death of Rumindah (Sumohadiwidjojo n.d.: 40). Rumindah's death left Subud without a female spiritual helper to assist Pak Subuh in disseminating the *latihan*. Upon marrying Sumari, Pak Subuh appointed his new wife as the women's spiritual helper, and since then the Subud movement has been readily accessible to women (Longcroft 1993: 95). The tradition of appointing wives as spiritual helpers continued in the aftermath of Sumari's death, when Pak Subuh married Mastuti in 1974. She accompanied Pak Subuh during the last period of his life (Sumohadiwidjojo n.d.: 64), and assisted him in the further development of the Subud movement inside and outside Indonesia. The members of the Subud movement around the world also honoured her as an Ibu figure.

Subud's emphasis on revering Pak Subuh's wives extended to that of his first child, Siti Rahayu Wiryohudoyo (b. 1928), from his first marriage. Siti Rahayu was first exposed to Subud's international members after Sumari's death when she began to accompany Pak Subuh on his overseas travels, for instance in 1957 and in 1972 (Longcroft 2001: 204). Siti Rahayu's role in the Subud movement was secured when she had her ascension in 1971. From then on, Pak Subuh assigned her a duty to provide new names to those requesting them (Lestiono n.d.: 43; Smith, this volume). After the death of Pak Subuh on 23 June 1987, Ibu Rahayu was recognized as the most respected informal leader of the Subud movement, and members also address her as Ibu. Most adherents of the movement perceive that she is endowed with charisma, hence her advice is the most sought after since the death of Pak Subuh. The Subud example contrasts to that of formal *tarekat* that adhere to *shari'ah* notions of male authority as the only form of legitimate leadership. However, an examination of spiritual attainment of female Sufis reveals that women have played a strong role as mystics throughout history.

'Men sent in the form of women': spiritual attainment of female Sufi seekers

The history of Islamic mysticism shows that asceticism and sexual abstention were more common among female than male Sufis. Rabi'ah Al-Adawiyah

was recorded among those early female Sufis who observed these practices (Smith 1978). This may be seen as an effort on the part of female Sufis to break the prevailing image that women are inferior to men in terms of spiritual and religious capacity. These female Sufis observe strict ascetic exercises like fasting and supererogatory night prayer, which might lead them to cease their menstruation. This is due to the fact that menstruation has been employed in Islamic tradition as a justification to ascribe an inferior status to women (Elias 1988).

It is common for Muslim authors to describe these female Sufis as 'women who achieved the status of men' or as 'a man sent in the form of woman' (Elias 1988: 211). There was also a widespread saying among Sufis that 'the seeker of God is masculine' (Schimmel 1982: 147). Such expressions are normally considered to be an appreciation of the spiritual achievement of Sufi seekers, but these expressions in fact confirm the inherent inferiority of women by reinforcing patriarchal modes of thought that are so prevalent in Islamic and Sufi traditions.

By contrast, we encounter attempts by some scholars to describe the 'feminine' as an ideal state of spirituality (Elias 1988: 209). Such efforts can be observed, for instance, in the works of classical figures such as Ibn al-'Arabi (d. 1240) and Jalal al-Din Rumi (d. 1273), as well as contemporary authors such as Annemarie Schimmel (1975, 1982, 1993, 1995) and Sachiko Murata (1992).

Ibn al-'Arabi transformed the concept of divine love into the notion of the 'creative' or 'ideal' feminine. For him, the spiritual woman exemplifies the medium in a perfect manner through which one can attain an understanding of the divine beloved, or in other words he strives to conceive of the 'celestial' woman as a characteristic and the highest manifestation of the divine. In keeping with this, Jalal al-Din Rumi is convinced that 'celestial' woman is a ray of the divine. This standpoint seems to glorify the 'celestial' woman as 'ideal' or 'creative' feminine (Elias 1988). One may see, however, that the efforts to ascribe the quality of 'feminine' to the ideal state of a human being, and of spirituality, are also idealist, or in other words, they are based on the idealism of certain persons. The viewpoint of some authors who consider the 'beingness' (Smith 1978) (rather than the 'masculinity' or 'femininity') of the seeker after God may be able to do more justice in relation to the position and spiritual achievement of female mystics.

Menstruation, sexuality and female leadership

Menstruation has been offered as a valid reason why women are hesitant to participate in the rituals of the *tarekat*, particularly those that demand periods of spiritual retreat. This explains why the majority of female participants in *tarekat* retreats and rituals are middle-aged to elderly women who have ceased menstruation. As one female disciple I interviewed explained, menstruation has hindered women from aspiring to the leadership of the *tarekat*. In keeping with more general Islamic practice, the Sufi orders do not allow a

menstruating woman to observe the rituals of the *tarekat*, let alone lead the communal recitation of God's names (*dhikr*).

Stories about relationships between male masters and female disciples reveal hidden sexual dimensions that present problems for Sufi orders. The Nishapurian Sufi Ahmad ibn al-Khidruyya (d. 854) expressed jealousy upon learning that his wife, Fatima, removed her veil whilst engaged in discussion with her Sufi master, Tayfur Abu Yazid al-Bistami. Fatima explained to her husband that her relationship with her master was purely for spiritual purposes, which she continued with, until the time she noticed that her master was watching her hand, which was an indication that his intention was no longer purely spiritual (Roded 1994; Schimmel 1982).

Such intense contact is necessary for the master–disciple relationship, yet between a male master and a female disciple can lead to ethical problems, and this reason is enough to prevent and limit the number of female Sufi leaders. Therefore, female masters and deputies in *tarekat* are usually the master's relatives (daughters, wives or sisters), which is a strategy used to avoid ethical problems that conflict with *shari'ah*-based interpretations of sexuality. Yet when interpreted from another perspective, it is also possible that women have received the transference of their male relatives' charisma or, in other words, that women are in the shadow of men. Achmad Mulyadi's (2007) account of the female Sufi master Nyai Syafi'ah reveals that this female personage was initiated as *murshida* in the Naqshbandiyya-Mazhariyya in Madura by her husband, serving as his assistant. A similar case can be found in the Muridiyya order in Senegal, where Sokhna Magat Diop was assigned the rank of *marabout* (a leader of one branch of the order) due to the absence of a male heir upon her father's death. Prior to dying, her father appointed her as his successor of the *tarekat* (Bop 2005). We also encounter a similar case in the Tijaniyya in Madura. Nyai Musyarrah was appointed as the female circle leader (*muqaddama*) by her relative, Kyai Jauhari (Van Bruinessen 1995).

The Mawlawiyya order opens more possibilities for the interaction between men and women. The masters of this order supervise both men and women, and both sexes at times conduct the musical whirling ceremony together in one place (Helminski 2002). This is the most likely reason why we encounter the presence of female masters in this Sufi order. Hülya Küçük (2009: 152), however, points out that the intense interaction between men and women in an order does not necessarily mean that it also allows women to hold offices. The Bektashiyya provide a common space for the activities of men and women, but not for female leadership.

There are several reasons why a female leader in the circle of *tarekat* is problematic. If a woman was to be incorporated in the *silsilah* and authorized to initiate both women and men, this would contradict the Islamic principle that women are not allowed to lead the religious rituals of men which is derived from the stipulation that women are not allowed to lead the congregational prayers of men. Or, if a woman was included in the *silsilah* and granted a limited authorization for initiating female applicants into the order,

this would run counter to the ideas underlying the *silsilah*, which is regarded as a means of transmitting full male authority.

The Subud movement adopts a noteworthy position regarding menstruation and other female biological matters, because members consider menstruation as a kind of purification, and therefore ban menstruating women from performing the spiritual training. Pregnancy is also considered a form of purification, and accordingly after seven months of pregnancy a woman is not allowed to perform the spiritual training, unless it arises spontaneously.

This is a clear message that, in Subud, menstruation does not obstruct women in aspiring to roles of authority and in attaining higher levels of spirituality. In this movement, a woman at an age of menstruation can be appointed as a spiritual helper. This is due to the principle of collective leadership that has developed in Subud, which enables menstruating spiritual helpers to be replaced by non-menstruating ones, and members may perform the communal spiritual training even in the absence of spiritual helpers. I now turn to a comparative discussion of female leadership in Subud and *tarekat* TQN that is based on fieldwork I conducted in both groups from 2007 to 2008.

Female leadership in Tarekat Qadiriyya wa Naqshbanidyya and Subud

The case of Sa'adah Muslih (b. 1926), the wife of TQN's high-profile leader, Muslih 'Abd al-Rahman al-Maraqi (d. 1981), problematizes discussions of female leadership in a *tarekat* that is officially opposed to women in positions of leadership and authority. Sa'adah Muslih is involved in organizing certain aspects of TQN communal ritual at the Pesantren Futuhiyyah, Mranggen in Demak.

The collective ritual of TQN comprises three main sections: the teaching of Islamic law (*shari'ah*), the concluding prayer sequence (*khataman*) and the recital of *dhikr* (*tawajjuhan*). The first section of the communal ritual is led by a religious scholar.[2] This particular section clearly demonstrates the order's commitment to *shari'ah*. The latter two sessions are led by a Sufi master.

The collective ritual of TQN at the Pesantren Futuhiyyah, Mranggen, is normally held twice a week, on Mondays (for men) and Thursdays (for women). The communal ritual for male members is held from approximately 10.00 a.m. until 1.00 p.m. The communal ritual for female members of TQN begins earlier as a result of the teachings of Sa'adah Muslih. She instructs the congregation to perform the supererogatory prayer of glorification (*salat al-tasbih*), teaches the prescriptions of Islamic law and the recitation of *salawat* (poems to praise God and the Prophet Muhammad). Sa'adah Muslih is entitled to teach Islamic law at the TQN gathering but she is not authorized to lead the *khataman* and the *tawajjuhan* or to initiate applicants into the brotherhood because she has not been appointed the position of *khalifa*.

Many female disciples visit Sa'adah to ask for her advice and *baraka.* Female disciples prefer to consult Sa'adah rather than male religious leaders

(*kyai*), due to her seniority and her closeness to the disciples. She also provides the female adherents with authority to recite certain supplications. Some of these supplications were recorded in her writings. *Tarekat* members strongly acknowledge Sa'adah's spirituality, but assigning her an office in the *tarekat* is another matter, and this remains a problem for most TQN leaders.

Sa'adah's involvement in the organization of the TQN communal ritual is, however, remarkable when we compare it to the limited role of other female religious personages (*nyai*) in Mranggen, most particularly at Pesantren asy-Syarifah, Pesantren Ibrohimiyyah and Pesantren Rohmaniyyah. These *pesantren* also hold communal rituals for the female adherents of TQN, but without active female personages. The communal ritual in these *pesantren* is controlled completely by male leaders.

Sa'adah's ability to play an active role in organizing the communal ritual is due in part to her husband's charisma. She is, however, also recognized for her religious and spiritual knowledge, found in her religious treatises, including *al-Bayan li al-salat al-masnuna* (Explanation on Supererogatory Prayer), *Durrat al-fawa'id* (Pearl of Wise Sayings), *Risalat atibba' al-qulub* (Treatise on the Physicians of the Soul) and *Munh al-'ibada* (Virtue of Worship).The fact that Sa'adah is consulted by the female disciples is a clear indication that she is recognized as a leader of the *tarekat*. One may say that she is a de facto leader of considerable significance despite the fact that she is not assigned a formal office.

Sa'adah's mastering of religious and spiritual knowledge can be considered as an aspect of her (limited) agency. Her capacity is recognized by *tarekat* members, especially female followers. The male leaders of the TQN also acknowledge Sa'adah's capacity, and accordingly they allot time for her to lead some parts of the TQN communal ritual. Sa'adah is aware of this capacity, and she continues to guide and to give advice to female adherents. Sa'adah maximizes her role as a female leader, aware of the doctrinal constraint that she cannot initiate female aspirants into the order. The notion of agency serves to substantiate the notion of role, most notably in highlighting different modalities of capacity which evolve in an actor's endeavours. Agency can thus be construed as

> a temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (in its 'iterational' or habitual aspect) but also oriented toward the future (as a 'projective' capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and toward the present (as a 'practical-evaluative' capacity to contextualize past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment).
>
> (Emirbayer and Mische 1998: 962)

In the Subud movement, both males and females are designated as spiritual helpers with limited agency. Female spiritual helpers possess the same authority as their male counterparts, yet their entitlement to initiate applicants is restricted to their respective sex. At present, the highest informal

leader of this movement is a woman, Ibu Rahayu, the daughter of the founder, Pak Subuh. The emergence of Ibu Rahayu as the leader of the Subud movement shows that the adherents were in need of such a figure. It is worth remarking that Pak Subuh never considered himself as a leader, although this is questionable because some members interpret that his practices were in fact those of a leader, and it cannot be denied that his advice as well as his teachings are the most sought after in the movement. Ruspana (2005) points out that most Subud members regard Pak Subuh as the 'spiritual leader.'

Ibu Rahayu's role in Subud was secured when she had her ascension in 1971. Such an experience is considered a legitimation of leadership in Subud (Smith, this volume). This experience allowed Ibu Rahayu to discern better the nature of the *latihan* and accordingly do more for its propagation. As an informal leader of Subud, Ibu Rahayu clarifies in her speeches that it would be difficult to talk about the experience of the members if she herself had not experienced it.

Acknowledgement of Ibu Rahayu's authority in Subud is most visible in Subud texts in the aftermath of her ascension. The second edition of *Bapak's Advice and Guidance to Helpers* (1971) does not contain any explanation from her, but the third edition of *Bapak's Advice and Guidance for Helpers* (1981) incorporates some of her explanations. Ibu Rahayu's earliest explanation recorded in this handbook is dated November 1974, a few years after her ascension in 1971. When we look into the audio compilation of Ibu Rahayu's talks, we notice that her earliest explanation was recorded in this audio library dated June 1972, sometime after her ascension in 1971.

Ibu Rahayu's ascension is regarded an indication of her spiritual capacity (Smith, this volume). In this regard, ascension can be considered to represent Ibu Rahayu's agency, which cannot be detached from the spiritual habitus of the Subud movement. In Subud, ascension has been deemed as a practitioner's highest spiritual achievement. Pak Subuh is also believed to have had this sort of experience before he began to spread the *latihan*. This spiritual credential has helped Ibu Rahayu in intensifying her role as a female leader within the movement. The acknowledgement of this role by Subud members ultimately translates into authority.

Conclusion

The standpoint of the *tarekat* pertaining to the structuring and conveyance of authority has a direct impact on the question of the possibility of female leadership. In the circle of *tarekat*, spiritual authority is transferred from male to male or, in other words, the *silsilah* is bound to specific names and personages and leadership is hierarchical. The appointment of a subordinate leader is performed by an individual from the higher levels of leadership or by those who possess authority for this action. It is because of the principle of *silsilah*, the structure of authority in the *tarekat* and *shari'ah*-based notions of sexuality and the female body that the possibility of female leadership remains

restricted, especially in relation to ethical problems of interaction between a male master and his female disciples. I point out here that in orders where there is intense interaction between men and women, it does not necessarily mean that these orders accept or allow women in authority or leadership positions.

One possible reason for the emergence of female leadership in the Subud movement is the fact that in Subud an egalitarian principle underlies relationships among practitioners. Interaction between leaders and ordinary members is not based on the disciple–master mode of relationship, in which the authorization of the master is a necessity for the disciple if the latter aspires to an office in the organization. Likewise, the disciple–master mode of relationship necessitates an intense contact between two parties so that the master may convey her or his teachings to the disciple. In Subud, intensive contact between leaders and ordinary members is encouraged, but this is not considered a prerequisite for members' further spiritual achievement.

The structure and mode of conveying authority in Subud have direct implications for the possibility of female leadership. This movement has developed a collective authority from which the appointment of local spiritual helpers comes. There is nothing in the organizational structure of Subud similar to the notion of *silsilah*, which when compared to *tarekat* indicates that there is no problem in designating a woman as a spiritual helper (see Smith, this volume).

Women have the same access to spiritual enlightenment as men do, yet the designation of a woman as a formal leader remains a problem in some *tarekat*, as it does more broadly in the Muslim world. Women may enjoy a close communion with God and throughout history have obtained reputations of sainthood, but formal leadership in the *tarekat* is another matter; this sort of leadership requires a formal recognition and authorization, which is mostly in the hands of men.

Notes

1 This chapter has been adapted from part of my doctoral thesis and book *Ritual and Leadership in the Subud Brotherhood and the Tarekat Qadiriyya wa Naqshbandiyya* (Berlin: EB-Verlag, 2012). I wish to thank Bianca J. Smith and Mark Woodward for their comments on versions of this chapter.

2 During my fieldwork, I encountered various types of religious scholars who led this session of communal ritual. Some of them obtained the authorization as *khalifa*, some did not, and some were not members of TQN (interview with TQN leaders and a leader of the *pesantren* in Mranggen, Central Java).

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Part III

Muslim feminisms

Islamic and Islamist orientations

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6 Interpreting and enacting Islamic feminism in Pesantren Al-Muayyad Windan

Saipul Hamdi

Islamic feminist discourses that emerged in the twentieth century were partly inspired by the romantic history of Islam's Prophet Muhammad, who fought for women's rights at a time when women were considered as lesser humans and inferiors in the Arab world (Engineer 2005; Mernissi 1987; Wadud 1999). Together with Western feminist theories, the Prophet's movement inspired Muslim women around the world, including those in Indonesia. This was especially the case in the 1990s, when the translation of Middle Eastern and South Asian Islamic feminist discourses into Indonesian enabled Muslim women's groups to build gender justice movements using feminist hermeneutic methodologies to reinterpret the Qur'an and Hadith (traditions concerning the words and acts of the Prophet Muhammad) (Dzuhayatin *et al*. 2002; Ismail 2003; Muttaqin 2008). These efforts reignited the spirit of the Prophet's struggle among Indonesians, attracting a variety of responses from the Muslim community, including from conservatives and Islamists who rejected the new discourses as un-Islamic and deviant.

Pesantren (a traditional Islamic boarding school for the study of the Qur'an, Hadith and other classical Islamic texts) have become important agents of social change in Indonesia, playing strategic roles in exposing women's rights issues; however, not all *pesantren* are open to or can accept feminism as an ideology because of the patriarchal nature of Islamic theology and orthodoxy which dominates curricula. In these *pesantren*, the word 'feminism' is considered to be a Western product, capable of contaminating Islamic values. The emergence of the *pesantren*-based Islamic feminist movement was a response to national and global concerns about Muslim gender issues and developed with a clear vision and mission that set out to challenge and reform the patriarchal *pesantren* tradition.

There are two major identities associated with *pesantren* that legitimize patriarchal authority: the *kyai* (male Muslim leader) and the *kitab kuning* (classical Islamic texts). A *kyai* is the central figure in the *pesantren* who possesses the highest authority as leader, policy-maker and interpreter of Islam; the traditional *kyai* is a patriarch or a 'king' in his cultural entity (Dhofier 1990). The texts he teaches to his loyal students (*santri*) reinforce male dominance and are considered sacred in the *pesantren* (Dhofier 1990;

Madjid 1997). These two *pesantren* identities – the *kyai* and *kitab kuning* – with the support of a patriarchal culture, embody a gender bias, and have become targets of feminist criticism. The power of authority and hierarchy in a *pesantren* presents problems for feminists seeking to challenge such structure, because only a more powerful *kyai* may challenge the authority of another *kyai* (Dhofier 1990). This indicates that the role of the *kyai* is an important aspect of the Muslim feminist movement.

This chapter explores these themes in the formation of a local Muslim women's movement among female and male university students and their *kyai* in Pesantren Al-Muayyad Windan in Surakarta, Java. Based on fieldwork I conducted in the *pesantren* complex from 2005 to 2006, I show how the establishment of a Centre for Women's Studies facilitated the critique, deconstruction and reinterpretation of Islamic texts by drawing on Middle Eastern and South Asian Islamic feminist discourses, which *santri* selectively implemented as part of a women's empowerment community programme without labelling themselves as 'feminist'. The students' positions suggest that they move between forms of feminist and Islamic activism, showing that these categories are fluid and unstable. The *santri* are part-time activists who are inspired by Islamic feminist ideologies and strategically place themselves in the community as *santri* gender activists. The controversies surrounding the terms 'feminist' and 'feminism' indicate that in many *pesantren santri* must negotiate with these borrowed terms which may translate into anti-Islamic sentiment. It is for these reasons that some prefer to classify themselves as activists and not feminists, even though they actively engage with a range of feminist ideologies, including both Islamic and Western secular ones.

New *pesantren* designs: Al-Muayyad Mangkuyudan Surakarta and its subsidiaries

In the last two decades the issue of the *pesantren* as an important education institution in Indonesia has featured in academic projects at national and international levels (Abdullah *et al*. 2008; Dhofier 1990; Lukens-Bull 2005; Pohl 2009; Woodward *et al*. 2010). In order to understand the development of *pesantren* institutions, it is necessary to know the religio-political dynamics of the largest Islamic organization, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), which facilitates many *pesantren* networks. *Pesantren* underwent significant developments and progress after Kyai Abdurrahman Wahid, better known as Gus Dur (d. 2009), initiated socio-religious reforms in the NU organization during his time as leader (1984–98). He introduced new discourses to NU including those of democracy, pluralism, human rights, gender and religious freedom for minorities. These discourses developed not only in the NU community in general, but also in *pesantren*, where the majority of NU *santri* receive their religious education. This movement had an enormous impact on *pesantren* in the NU network, although some *pesantren* rejected these ideas. *Pesantren* that were able to accept these ideas constituted a new kind of *pesantren*, reflecting

an engagement with more progressive modes of Islamic thought and practice. Progressive here refers to efforts to reform methodologies used for interpreting religious texts (*ijtihad*) by appropriating them to the modern, current context.

Despite their social importance, *pesantren* are institutions considered to be *kolot* (backward) and traditional in society by other Muslims who class themselves as modern. The *pesantren* is unique when compared to other educational institutions because of its communal design, which consists of a mosque, a hostel (boarding house) and devotion to learning the way of the Prophet with an emphasis on spiritual teachings. *Pesantren* and *madrasah* are the only education institutions combining local religious and national curricula (Abawahida 2002; Dhofier 1990; Madjid 1997; Zuhri 2002). *Pesantren* across Indonesia face dilemmas as they work to preserve tradition, and at the same time accommodate the global challenge of modernity in the wider community in order to survive and compete in the changing world. Many *pesantren* disengage from these challenges by preserving cultural traditions. Other *pesantren*, such as Al-Muayyad Mangkuyudan Surakarta in Solo, respond positively to new and alternative discourses by selecting which ones they engage with, showing that Indonesian *pesantren* are dynamic and strategic in their ability to engage with a range of global discourses.

Al-Muayyad Mangkuyudan is an umbrella *pesantren* consisting of a complex network of minor *pesantren*, each with its own autonomy and specialization. The central *pesantren* consists of kindergartens, primary schools and secondary schools, where both male and female teachers are employed, catering to students from all over Indonesia. Its subsidiary branches are new forms of *pesantren* that cater to university students who board at the hostel combining the life of the *pesantren* with university studies (see Rahayu, this volume).

In 1930, Kyai Abdul Mannan built Al-Muayyad in Laweyan, Surakarta on land donated by Kyai Ahmad Shofawi (his fellow *santri* from a *pesantren* in central Java). The name Al-Muayyad (from '*ayyada*', meaning 'to strengthen') was given by Kyai M. Mashur, a leader of one of the Naqshbandiyya Sufi orders (*tarekat*) and founding father of Pesantren Al-Manshur, Popongan, Tegalgondo, Wonosari, Klaten. During 1930–37, Kyai Abdul Mannan used a Sufistic approach in the teaching-learning process. This approach was typical of many *pesantren* during that era when there was no official study curriculum used by *pesantren*. A Sufistic approach was used to build a religious character and Islamic attitude among the *santri* by teaching them basic religious and mystical knowledge. In the early stages, the *pesantren* had limited students and catered to those mostly from the two *kyai*s' families, their distant kin and workers from Kyai Ahmad Shofawi's Batik Kurai company. Other *kyai* in the region also took part in building and developing the *pesantren* including Kyai Dasuki, Kyai Hambali Ahmad Asy'ari and Kyai Dhamanhuri. During 1937–80, the founding father's son, Kyai Ahmad Umar Abdul Mannan, inherited the leadership and implemented a Qur'anic approach which prioritized the in-depth study and memorization of the Qur'an. He was appointed as leader by

his father at age 20 upon his return from study at *pesantren* Krapyak Yogyakarta, Pesantren Temas Pacitan, and Pesantren Mojosari, Nganjuk.

When Kyai Abdur Rozaq Shofawi (son of Kyai Ahmad Shofawi) assumed the leadership in 1980, he introduced a modern approach in the schooling and management of the *pesantren*. Under his leadership Pesantren Al-Muayyad built a further five *pesantren* branches and twenty-five smaller alumni *pesantren* in and around Solo. This chapter explores one of these branches, Pesantren Al-Muayyad Windan – a university student-based *pesantren* and home to the emergence of a local Muslim women's movement which applies Islamic feminist discourses and interpretations of the Qur'an and texts as methods for women's empowerment in the *pesantren* community and its surroundings. This *pesantren* has been described as 'progressive' (and even 'liberal') by conservative *kyai* who reject what they perceive to be Western discourses that *kyai* and *santri* engage with.

Pesantren Al-Muayyad Windan: progressive, feminist and multicultural

Al-Muayyad Windan was established on 5 October 1996 and it plays an important role in the ongoing development of the greater Al-Muayyad Mangkuyudan Surakarta *pesantren* complex. The Windan *pesantren* was especially designed for students studying in Solo. It differs from other *pesantren* because its students have degrees of authority and power in decision-making, rather than allocating authority solely to a *kyai* as in other traditional *pesantren*. There are several *kyai* at this *pesantren* who have entrusted the students to manage and organize the learning processes. This means that the *kyai*'s role is as facilitator, whereas all decision-making is under students' control based on the premise that this will train them to be independent, productive, creative and innovative. Pesantren Al-Muayyad Windan is currently led by Kyai Dian Nafi', the nephew of Kyai Ahmad Umar Abdul Mannan.

The purpose of this *pesantren* establishment is in accordance with its vision and mission to produce pious, dignified and competitive Muslims, while at the same time developing the wider *pesantren* community. This vision and mission is set out and defined in Al-Muayyad's curriculum, with an emphasis on 'participatory education' (Pesantren Al-Muayyad 2004b). Participatory education here means that the curriculum combines learning in the classroom with learning outside the classroom. This mix is played out in two categories of *pesantren*: 'primary' and 'secondary' *pesantren*. Primary *pesantren* focus on the study of Islamic texts in the classroom, while secondary *pesantren* focus on volunteer work experience in the community or non-government organizations, and in schools for those undertaking religious teacher training or *pesantren* management training (Pesantren Al-Muayyad 2004b; Pohl 2009).

The daily programme and activities in Al-Muayyad Windan start at 4.00 a.m., when students wake for the morning prayer before dawn (*subuh*), followed by 10–20 minutes of recitation of selected Qur'anic/Arabic texts (*wirid*), and

then intensive study of Islamic classical texts such as *fiqh* (legal texts), *tafsir* (interpretation), and Hadith (Pesantren Al-Muayyad 2004a). Kyai Dian Nafi' and other *kyai* take turns teaching classical texts, and sometimes students are taught by senior male or female students who have mastered the texts. This study programme finishes at 6.30 a.m., when students have breakfast and prepare to leave for their respective universities. Upon returning from university in the late afternoon, students perform the *magrib* prayer at dusk, followed by *wirid*. After the *isya*' prayer at around 7.00 p.m., students resume their study of the classical texts and other subject matters, according to the fixed schedule. Parts of the curriculum include thematic discussions based on current academic discourses that they learn at university, especially ones that concern women's issues.

Pesantren Al-Muayyad Windan is different from other traditional *pesantren* which prioritize the surveillance of *santri* (see Rahayu, this volume). In Windan, there are no female caretakers (*pengasuh*) for female students. Kyai Dian Nafi' (as the leader of the *pesantren*) is responsible for taking care of both male and female students. This is in part because Windan has a small number of students in the boarding house compared to those at Al-Muayyad Mangkuyudan, where live-in supervisors are required in male and female living quarters. Unlike in other *pesantren*, at Windan the relationship between male and female students is relaxed and allows them to mix freely with each other, to hang out and play sport together, and to engage in debates and discussions in and outside of class. Despite having the freedom to socialize, there is a strong emphasis placed on the *shari'ah*-based regulation of sexuality which stipulates that they should not have sexual contact before marriage. Students uphold these values and willingly follow *shari'ah* regulations in the *pesantren*.

The students who study in Pesantren Al-Muayyad Windan are from different educational backgrounds, classes and ethnic groups, although the majority are Javanese, and are aged between 18 and 23 years. They study in various universities including Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta (UMS), Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Negeri (STAIN) Surakarta and Universitas Sebelas Maret Surakarta (UNS). The diversity of students' ethnic backgrounds reflects the *pesantren*'s emphasis on promoting multiculturalism, pluralism and inter-faith dialogue in *pesantren* culture by acknowledging and encouraging understanding of minority groups such as the Chinese and other religions, including Christianity. For example, the *pesantren* held an exchange live-in programme for students of different religious backgrounds to facilitate inter-faith dialogue between Christians and Muslims (Pesantren Al-Muayyad 2004a). Al-Muayyad Windan's accommodation of global discourses on religious tolerance, multiculturalism and pluralism further cements its rejection by conservative *kyai* and their respective communities.

Untypical of traditional *pesantren*, Islamic feminist and gender discourses have developed in Al-Muayyad Windan through the establishment of *Pusat Studi Perempuan* (PSP), the Centre for Women's Studies (Pesantren Al-Muayyad 2004a; Pohl 2009). Despite the abhorrence of feminist ideology in

other *pesantren* communities, Al-Muayyad Windan has proven to be consistent in its use of Islamic feminist ideologies to deconstruct Islamic texts and increase awareness and resistance to traditional patriarchal *pesantren* culture and values. Al-Muayyad Windan's *santri* have access to feminist ideas and discourses from inside and outside the *pesantren*, including from women's NGOs, government media, universities and the women's wings of religious organizations (Van Doorn-Harder 2006). Due to the negativity associated with the label 'feminist', the students and *kyai* do not describe themselves as such, but rather they employ feminist and Islamic feminist ideologies and hermeneutical methods in their community work projects which focus on women's empowerment. This is further reflected in the policies of Windan's parent *pesantren*, Al-Muayyad.

The greater Al-Muayyad *pesantren* complex has successfully implemented gender-sensitive policies that allow for male and female teaching and administrative staff. The presence of female staff in *pesantren* more generally was traditionally limited to supervisory roles in the female hostel, as informal teachers in female-only class groups or as secretaries and treasurers (see Srimulyani 2008). The social integration of some *pesantren* into the formal education sector has brought changes to gendered regulations. Kyai Abdur Rozak Shafawi (the head *kyai* at Al-Muayyad Mangkuyudan) has welcomed such policies and supports equal opportunities for men and women who choose to further their careers in the *pesantren*. Kyai Dian Nafi', the head *kyai* at Al-Muayyad Windan, has also declared that it is no longer the era for differentiating between men and women in these contexts. In an interview I conducted with him during my fieldwork in the *pesantren*, he explained that, 'Ideally, we all occupy the same position in the community, religion, the country and the *pesantren*.' Al-Muayyad Windan attempts to implement the principle of equality through the teaching-learning system which encourages both male and female students to teach subjects and lead discussion groups in co-ed classes, where students focus on leadership, professionalism and accountability.

These *kyai* demonstrate their ability to implement gender-sensitive rules in the management of *pesantren* life by valuing meritocracy over anatomy, contradicting popular stereotypes of *pesantren* as backward patriarchal, male-dominated institutions (which many indeed are). From here we can see that these *kyai* hold different views and interpretations about Islamic teaching practices to those found in other *pesantren*. The greater Al-Muayyad *pesantren* complex has implemented government policies on gender quotas in education institutions (which stipulate a 30 per cent quota of female staff). In Al-Muayyad Mangkuyudan, women are employed as teachers in the *madrasah*'s primary and high schools, as well as in the *pesantren*, based on a recruitment system that values competency and integrity in a teacher. Female teachers also possess structural positions as supervisors and administrators in the *pesantren*. In 2004, women constituted 30 per cent of teaching staff in the *pesantren*. The gender-friendly approach in Al-Muayyad contrasts with many

pesantren communities that maintain patriarchal ideas about women in leadership positions. In East Java, for example, several *pesantren* released *fatwa* banning women from participating in state elections. *Pesantren* Al-Muayyad publicly opposed these *fatwa* by declaring that any woman may run for a leadership position if she is qualified to do so. Viewed in this light, the Al-Muayyad *pesantren* can indeed be classified as progressive in contrast to conservative *pesantren* that continue to debate the issue of female leadership.

In Al-Muayyad Mangkuyudan, female teachers are responsible for teaching students discourses on Muslim women's issues and play an important role in correcting the misogynist interpretations of the texts. It is here that women contribute the most by offering critical insights into gender. In the other smaller *pesantren* that do not have paid teaching staff, qualified *santriwati* (female *santri*) and *santri* teach fellow students, offering those women who do so the opportunity to train themselves as leaders of discussions among groups of men. Female staff also take on 50 per cent of the supervisory roles in the female hostel. They live together with the *santriwati* and have authority over the students after school hours. These female supervisors use their space and time with the *santriwati* to discuss gender issues in depth. The wives of *kyai* do not necessarily play roles in the female quarters of the *pesantren*, although, if they do, they are usually involved in teaching. Children of *kyai* are generally active because they inherit leadership and instructional roles. The son of a *kyai* usually supervises and guides male *santri*, while a *kyai*'s daughter will do the same for *santriwati*. In general, after a *kyai* dies, his son succeeds his leadership, except in cases where he has no son, which allows for his daughter's husband or a qualified *santri* to assume the leadership, and in some cases his daughter may do so (Smith and Hamdi, this volume).

The construction of Islamic feminism in Pesantren Al-Muayyad Windan

In Indonesian *pesantren*, terms such as *emansipasi wanita* (women's emancipation), *gerakan perempuan* (women's movement) and *kesetaraan gender* (gender justice/equality) are widely circulated in the community to refer to women's empowerment rather than feminism, which shares an uneasy relationship with normative Islam. Essentially, however, these terms refer to movements which struggle for women's rights and justice. 'Women's emancipation' was made known by the famous Javanese woman Raden Adjeng Kartini (1879–1904), who in the late nineteenth century struggled for women's right to education. Women's wings of Islamic organizations were also formed in the mid-twentieth century to empower Muslim women, including Aisyiyah (Muhammadiyah) (1931), Persistri (Persis) (1936) and Muslimat NU (Nahdlatul Ulama) (1946) (Nadjib n.d.; Robinson 2008).

It was not until the 1970s and 1980s, during the Suharto era, that the women's movement developed rapidly in non-government organizations and

government institutions inspired by the United Nations' agendas on gender equity (Robinson 2008). The Muslim women's movement in Indonesia began in the non-government organization sector and university organizations in major Javanese cities such as Yogyakarta, Jakarta and Bandung, in part spurred by the return of Indonesian students from Western universities, who brought with them new feminist and gender discourses (Abdullah 2001; Fakih 1996; Robinson 2008). During the 1990s, the translation of texts by Riffat Hassan, Fatima Mernissi, Asghar Ali Engineer and Amina Wadud set off new patterns of social transformation, especially among Muslim women's groups (Dzuhayatin *et al*. 2002; Ismail 2003; Robinson 2008). The movement strengthened as it gained popular support from Islamic scholars and activists, including Gus Dur and his wife Sinta Nuriah, who disseminated and developed the discourses on gender in *pesantren* and NU communities by deconstructing and reinterpreting classical texts written by clerics and scholars. Other scholars and activists have also been instrumental in developing Islamic feminist discourses and movements, including Lily Munir, Ciciek Farha, Khafifah Indar Parawansa, Wardah Hafidz and Siti Musdah Mulia (Robinson 2008: 113–14). They use hermeneutic and Western feminist approaches for reinterpreting classical texts on women.

Even though women's movements using feminist ideologies had already formed in secular circles in non-government organizations as well as in the government itself, over time these ideas entered the *pesantren* environments through university students and activists forming groups with different agendas and divergent understandings of *feminisme* (feminism), which was a new term in the *pesantren* world at that time (Dzuhayatin *et al*. 2002; Ismail 2003; Mas'udi 1997). The emergence of feminist discourses in universities led to the formation of women's studies centres in Islamic as well as secular universities, and then eventually in some progressive *pesantren* (like Al-Muayyad Windan). The introduction of feminism into *pesantren* communities around Indonesia (mostly in Java, and mostly through the women's wings of Nahdlatul Ulama) involved careful negotiation with the new discourses, because they presented challenges to the traditional gender ideologies and the patriarchal authority of the *kyai* as the central symbol of the *pesantren* world. It is here that differences among groups of Muslim women emerged, marking conservative from liberal and progressive Muslim orientations, and feminism from gender activism.

The Centre for Women's Studies in Al-Muayyad Windan was established in 1999 by *santri* university students, *kyai* and teaching staff living at the *pesantren* in response to female students' anxiety about their position as a minority group in the *pesantren*, which at that time had more male than female students. The *santriwati* felt that the *pesantren*'s policies favoured males, which led to inequality in their daily lives and which went against the principle of equality between men and women in Islam. The *santriwati* took their proposal to the head *kyai*, who called a meeting with all *pesantren* staff to consider the matter based on the premise that the Centre aimed to address

gender bias in the teaching materials and in practice in *pesantren* daily life. They agreed that the Centre would focus on two aspects: the first was the theoretical and theological aspects which would enable students to reinterpret classical texts about women, and the second was the implementation of these understandings at the level of practice in the *pesantren* itself, as well as in the form of advocacy in village communities surrounding the *pesantren*.

The basic assumption of the Centre in the initial stages was that work practices in the *pesantren* do not need to be gendered. Life in *pesantren* requires *santriwati* to clean their dormitories and the surrounding environment, shop at the market, to cook and do the gardening and other general domestic duties. Based on these work practices, the students argued that these jobs should be performed by male students as well to equalize the work load. These *santriwati* demanded equality in the *pesantren* workplace in terms of workload and practices.

In the early stages of the Centre's activities, the group focussed on discussions about gender discourses related to the internal operations of the *pesantren*, as it related to female students. Through the development of this discourse they formed wider networks in the community with women's non-government organizations, where they set up advocacy groups with village women who lived near the *pesantren*. This gender advocacy as 'action' formed into a clearly defined internal and external movement supported by an Islamic gender discourse. The internal aspects of this movement targeted the *pesantren*'s policies which called for the involvement of *santriwati* in the development and improvement of the *pesantren*. As a result, *santriwati* became involved in decision-making processes and assumed strategic positions (as coordinators or heads of programmes) in the *pesantren* and became active in local non-government organizations in the area. The female students organized internal programmes including thematic discussions based on interpretations of the classical texts that discussed women; training on gender issues, reproductive health and the improvement of human resources in the *pesantren*; in addition to traditional *pesantren* programmes including *pengajian* (religious instruction). The group also worked in partnership with other *pesantren* to hold training on the concept of 'transformative *pesantren*' which was held at Al-Muayyad in 2004.

The thematic discussions the group held related to issues in women's daily lives, which contrasted to the routine classes of the curriculum which prioritized the problem of women's issues in classical texts. The students prioritized the interpretation of these texts because it was from these that the initial gender bias they experienced in the *pesantren* emerged. Beyond this, the group worked to socialize these new interpretations in the community where Islamic gender ideologies also worked to subordinate women. The group conducted monthly programmes in villages, always targeting issues of reconstructing the role of women in Islam. The aim of these programmes was to initiate new perspectives on women's domestic roles where Islamic gender ideologies had played a role in portraying women as emotional and weak.

Reinterpreting the texts

Women's issues have always been part of a *pesantren*'s curriculum. In addition to teaching classical and contemporary Islamic texts, Al-Muayyad Windan also refers to Western secular and Islamic feminist books. These texts are consulted for reinterpreting, critiquing and deconstructing classical *fiqh* texts. The *fiqh* texts contain the most discussion about women, contract marriage, spousal relations, the rights and responsibilities of spouses, and inheritance rights (for example, *fathul qarib*, *fiqh an-nisa'*, *uqud al-lujjain fi huquq az-zaujain*), and also cover various other topics about society, politics and economy (Pesantren Al-Muayyad 2004b). Other topics covered in the curriculum include morality (*akhlak*) and guidance for males and females in the family and society (for example, *nashaikh al-ibad*, *ta'lim al-mutallim*, *bidayatul hidayah*, *akhlaq li al-banat*, *minhaj al-qashidin*) (Pesantren Al-Muayyad 2004b).

The *kyai* and *santri* use hermeneutic and contemporary feminist theories as tools to deconstruct and reconstruct ideas about gender and female subjectivity that have been defined in these classical books. They draw on feminist hermeneutic methods including that of Asma Barlas' (2004) method for reading the Qur'an which problematizes the notion of reading the sacred text by calling for an approach that reads 'behind the text', 'the text' and 'in front of the text'. This method not only enables students to deconstruct political misogyny in the texts, but also the accepted meanings about gender and to reinterpret them using verses that declare the equality between men and women and Islam's egalitarian aspects. The students understand that the Qur'an declares that Allah's creatures are judged based on their piety, and not on their difference from each other.

Major issues that students address in their hermeneutical interpretations of the texts include the issue of female domestication, the role of women in the public sphere, women's reproductive health and domestic violence. The domestication of women is a feature of cultural patriarchy and Islam which has become tradition in the *pesantren* community (Ismail 2003). The domestication of women corresponds to the stereotype of women as the second sex, as weak and imperfect in Islam. The legitimization of domesticity struggles for maintenance in the face of democratization, ideologies of gender egalitarianism and development. In order to address these issues, the *santri* draw on their understanding of Islam as an egalitarian religion that values males and females equally. They understand that the Prophet and his followers challenged the discriminatory practices against Arab women in Islam's early days working to free slave women from the patriarchal Jahiliyah tribe (Engineer 2005; Mernissi 1987; Wadud 1999). The Prophet explained that women's role should not be limited to the house, but rather that women are free to participate in public social activities and to work for a salary (*nafkah*). The *santri* support this by referring to the Prophet's first wife, Siti Khadijah, a trader who supported the Prophet financially. As Engineer (2005) has argued, the

issue of women's domesticity is the creation of conservative, orthodox male *ulama* who have ultimately constrained women to the so-called 'domestic sphere', making them dependent on their husbands or male kin.

Enacting Islamic feminism as women's empowerment

In addition to developing discourses on gender and feminism in the *pesantren*, the Centre for Women's Studies also works to transform these ideas into action and practice in the daily lives of women in communities surrounding the *pesantren*. The Centre for Women's Studies therefore draws on Islamic feminist ideas and tools for reinterpreting Islam, but more importantly applies these methods and ideas in community programmes. It is in line with the pattern of the greater Al-Muayyad *pesantren* policy on participatory education which encourages *santri* to apply the theories acquired in class to social practices in society. By working with the basic notion that man and woman are equal creatures, and that Islam is an egalitarian religion, students avoid labelling their practices as 'feminist', and rather choose to interpret their actions as 'Muslim' and 'Islamic'.

The shape of these external activities has included that of community support in villages in the form of religious sermons, training in gender issues and reproductive health, economic support for women, building networks with other non-government organizations, and cross-*kyai* visitations to other *pesantren*. The religious sermon training was intense, with two sermons each week that aimed to educate village women about Islam from a gender perspective. The training in reproductive health was conducted monthly in different villages and the programme for developing women's family economies targeted women from low class groups. These women were the most disadvantaged in terms of knowledge and access to resources. After consultation with the community, the *santri* found many social, economic and political problems in the village.

Rooted in Islam's spirit of helping the needy, the *santri* assessed the potential for these women to engage in business, which they concluded was promising for the production of fried fruit snacks. The *santri* assisted women with gaining access to credit agencies under a small business scheme that women managed independently. The *santri* raised funds to provide the necessary capital for women to pay off their loans so that they could start saving money for their family's future. The loans were given to every household head who participated in the project. The loans were interest free and women were able to pay them back in instalments over a one-year period. This scheme is typical of non-government organizational practice and, as in many other cases, it failed because the participants were unable to meet the repayment requirements. *Santri* from the Centre for Women's Studies consulted with the female participants in the project and learned that the reason for its failure was largely due to the irresponsible handling of the money by the women's husbands. Thus the group became more determined to educate the village community

about the negative effects of patriarchal culture on daily life. A year later, the group formed a partnership with another local non-government organization called Yayasan Indonesia Sejahtera (YIS) and reinstalled the economic assistance programme which proved a success after the implementation of extra training for women in gender issues and financial management.

The Centre for Women's Studies evaluated the efficacy of these programmes and found that village women were better off as a result of their participation in the programmes. The reproductive health training, for example, raised women's awareness about their reproductive rights, not only in sexual health matters but also in relation to domestic violence and gender discrimination. The women explained that after participating in the programmes they felt more empowered and had the self-confidence to get involved in other community projects. For the first time in that village, one of the women participants was elected as head of a village ward. The *santri* concluded that women's new knowledge of their rights enabled them to act in new ways and assume new positions in society.

Discrimination and violence against women in the home, community and by the state became central issues in Pesantren Al-Muayyad Windan as they assumed prominence in seminars, discussion groups and workshops, as well as in the community programmes carried out in the villages surrounding the *pesantren*. Rather than solely focusing on personal piety and studying the classical texts, students combined activities that provided support for the wider Muslim community with their piety and worship practices.

Kyai responses to women's issues

Indian Muslim scholar Engineer (2005) has argued for women's rights in Islam without describing himself as a feminist, because, as he understands, the Qur'an dignifies women. Engineer's position reflects those *kyai* who also embody the principles of equality and egalitarianism in Islam, and who play important roles in determining the success of the Muslim women's (feminist) movement. Traditionally, a *kyai* was/is a symbol of patriarchy in society and in the *pesantren*, wielding authority and power. A *kyai* can determine the attitude of a community and social relations within it, including attitudes towards women, by using his status as a religious cleric to interpret classical texts. Many *kyai* abuse their power and politicize texts for personal and/or group interests and in the process discriminate and marginalize women. The practice of polygamy and lack of access for women to interpret religious texts are examples of how *kyai* practise gender discrimination and inequality. However, since the socialization of gender and feminist ideologies in *pesantren* communities, *kyai* have become subject to pressure to accommodate these new discourses if they are to maintain their influence in their modernizing societies. It can be said that many Indonesian Muslim men support the Muslim women's movement and by default have become 'feminist' Muslims and gender experts, including figures such as Abdurraham Wahid, Faqihudin

Abdul Kodir, Nasaruddin Umar, Masdar F. Mas'udi and Syafiq Hasyim (Robinson 2008). These Muslim male scholars have contributed to the Muslim women's movement by reinterpreting religious texts and writing their own books and articles about gender. Patriarchal cultures in *pesantren* are undergoing change and progressive *kyai* are crucial to the successful change in behaviour of other male religious leaders.

Because a *kyai* is the centre of the *pesantren* world, the successful adoption of gender discourse in the *pesantren* depends on his ability to comprehend and accept such discourses. If a *kyai* is unwilling to negotiate with gender concepts, then the maintenance of misogynist interpretations of the texts will continue and women will be marginalized with no access to policy and decision-making processes. *Pesantren* have become sites for production and reproduction of gender imbalances and the subordination of women legitimized by religion.

During my fieldwork in Pesantren Al-Muayyad and Windan, I lived with several *kyai* who were able to successfully implement a gendered response to this discourse. They did so by encouraging both men and women to perform domestic duties in the *pesantren* and by supporting women in public work positions, including women in leadership. In support of these practices they drew on the example of Aisyah, one of the Prophet's wives, who was a leader in war, as evidence that the Prophet never banned women from positions of leadership. Kyai Rozak explained that in Islam women are allowed to become leaders in political spheres, but their work must be transparent and controlled. He further explained that there is a misunderstanding that women are not allowed to work for a salary because there is no normative decree suggesting this. With a *kyai*'s support for working women and women in leadership, feminist discourses in the *pesantren* were easily developed.

Furthermore, Muslich, one of the male directors at the *pesantren*, conveyed his concern for the gendered division of labour in a household where father figures continue to dominate in decision-making leading to the formation of the wife–husband relationship as one of object–subject respectively. He explained that, in this kind of relationship, women cannot function maximally because they are considered to be objects. In practice, the relationship formation should be one of subject–subject, where open communication and dialogue takes place in order to reduce the burdens of family life. These *kyai* also support women's right to decision-making about their reproductive health, and some even encourage men to take responsibility for contraception rather than putting women at risk by forcing them to use unsafe IUDs (intrauterine devices) provided by the government. These views are expressed through the training held by the Centre for Women's Studies by socializing reproductive health issues in the wider community. Kyai Abdul Aziz Ahmad holds similar views to those of Kyai Rozak and Muslich. According to him, there is no difference between women and men in Islam, but problems emerge because of the assumption that men are responsible for providing for the family, leaving women to the domestic sphere. The views of male leaders and

kyai from Pesantren Al-Muayyad and Windan contributed to the formation of the women's movement that developed among their *santri*, because *kyai* were able to accommodate gender discourses in hermeneutical ways.

Conclusion

The greater Al-Muayyad *pesantren* complex, including Windan, is a new style of *pesantren* in the sense of its acceptance of modern values and contemporary Islamic and Western discourses on feminism, gender, democracy and development. The engagement with these discourses has not caused the *pesantren* to jeopardize its Muslim identity, but has worked to enrich the quality of *pesantren* life. The feminist and gender discourses that students and teachers apply provide useful tools for reinterpreting the texts in flexible and contextual ways that can be applied in practice in the *pesantren* and the wider community. This approach is based on the understanding that texts are contextual and need to speak directly to real-life issues in the *pesantren* by studying and understanding them, and subsequently enacting this by integrating the texts' meanings into the wider community.

The case of Windan shows that feminism and *pesantren* lifestyles do not necessarily conflict because of ideological differences, but rather that they are complementary and can work together peacefully amidst the demands of global gender justice and equality for women. The role of a *kyai* is important because he possesses significant amounts of religious capital enabling him to influence the production and reproduction of gender and feminist discourses in *pesantren*. In some cases, a *kyai* can hinder progressive moves, especially those who maintain hierarchy and patriarchal culture by controlling policy and interpretation of texts.

Al-Muayyad Windan can be categorized as a progressive *pesantren* because of its non-traditional approach to challenging patriarchal conditions; conditions which have stigmatized *pesantren* as old-fashioned and backward institutions. The *pesantren* does this by emphasizing openness and dialogue to resolve various social problems in society. It was not only in the *pesantren* that changes were felt, but in the surrounding community women responded positively to the gender programmes and training implemented by *santri*. The association of some *pesantren* with terrorism in the post-9/11 period has to some degree stained the image of the *pesantren* network, leaving *pesantren* struggling to maintain their traditional place in a society that is rapidly changing. The open, plural and progressive character of the greater Al-Muayyad *pesantren* complex is an example of the possibilities to emerge from the *pesantren* world.

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7 Women's negotiation of status and space in a Muslim fundamentalist movement

Inayah Rohmaniyah

This chapter explores how members of one of Indonesia's most prominent Muslim fundamentalist organizations, *Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia* (MMI), or Indonesian Jihad Fighter's Council, respond to women's and gender issues in religious texts the organization publishes on its internet website. It contrasts the views of male and female members and argues that men are more willing to accept guidance from Saudi Arabian Wahhabi scholars than women. MMI is one of the fundamentalist groups that emerged following the fall of the New Order and the establishment of democracy in Indonesia in 1998. It was founded in 2002 as an umbrella organization bringing together groups and individuals seeking to establish Indonesia as a *shari'ah*-based Islamic state. One of the organization's founders and first *emir* (leader) was Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, who is generally considered to have been the spiritual leader of the terrorist organization *Jama'ah Islamiyah*. Ba'asyir was also among the founders of Pesantren al-Mukmin in Ngruki near Surakarta in Central Java that the International Crisis Group (2005a) identified as the centre of a small network of *pesantren* (a traditional Islamic boarding school for the study of the Qur'an, Hadith and other classical Islamic texts) in which radical Islamist teachings, rather than *kitab kuning* (classical Islamic texts), are the core of the curriculum. MMI has a Salafi religious orientation, combined with Muslim Brotherhood activism. Members interviewed in 2012 stated emphatically that only they understood Islamic truth, and that they were entitled to serve as moral police and to oppose sin and heresy by any means necessary.

MMI's paramilitary wing, *Laskar Mujahidin,* has been involved in a series of violent incidents directed against groups it believes to be socially or theologically deviant. There are no women in *Laskar Mujahidin*, but women do take part in non-violent demonstrations. In May 2012, MMI coordinated a violent attack on a seminar featuring a Canadian feminist activist, Irshad Manji.[1] Fliers distributed at the time of the attack described feminists as enemies of Islam and the Indonesian state. They also link feminism with liberalism and homosexuality. The fliers and MMI cadre interviewed at the time described Manji as an especially dangerous feminist because she is not afraid of going to hell and accused her of promoting the religion of lesbianism. The depiction

of feminists as religious deviants and lesbians is an increasingly common element of Indonesian fundamentalist discourse.

MMI promotes ideas of gender segregation common among conservative Indonesian Muslims but takes them to extremes. The organization's official positions are influenced by the writings of Saudi Arabian Wahhabi scholars. Some of the data presented here show that for the male leadership of MMI, women in general, and female sexuality in particular, are considered to be dangerous and potentially destructive forces if not contained by boundaries of *shari'ah* based domesticity.

In this chapter, I explore the ways in which women in MMI negotiate and construct their identities and subjectivities, their status and space, and confront issues of feminism and women's emancipation in the context of this fundamentalist ideological complex. Due to the exclusivity and secrecy of MMI members, it is very difficult to conduct interviews and therefore I rely primarily on religious texts written or translated by MMI leaders and compare these with texts written by male and female MMI authors. This analysis problematizes conventional Western thinking according to which Islamist women are considered to be submissive, powerless, non-thinkers and merely the objects and symbols of Islamist ideology. It is argued that theories ignoring the subjectivity and agency of Islamist women do not adequately explain the perspectives of women who are actively involved in promoting MMI religious, social and political agendas.

Global and national contexts

Islamic fundamentalism has a long history in Indonesia. It has become increasingly visible and challenging in the post-New Order period. Indonesia has never described itself as a religious or Islamic state and officially recognizes six major religions. The acceptance of *Pancasila*[2] as the ideological basis for the nation, points to the preference for a secular state rather than a religious one. There have, however, always been groups with an alternative vision, who would define Indonesia as an Islamic state.

The Reformation movement that led to the downfall of the Suharto regime ushered in a reform era in which all individuals and organizations celebrated freedom and competed to redefine national identity. This development, on the one hand, enhanced the process of democratization, but, on the other hand, brought about the resurgence of radical or fundamentalist organizations that had previously gone underground. Support for Islamic radicalism or fundamentalism has increased substantially and the most vivid and enduring images after the Suharto era have been those of radical Islam (Fealy 2004). In line with the re-emergence of fundamentalist movements, gender and women's issues have emerged as some of the most debated and deeply contested issues in political and religious discourse over the last two decades.

In the period after 1985, a discourse concerning feminist theory and gender analysis and their relevance to processes of social and political development

emerged among scholars, women activists and non-government organizations (Fakih 1996). At the same time, numerous translations of books written by internationally known progressive and liberal Muslim writers into Indonesian facilitated efforts by Indonesian scholars to rethink and reshape their theological and cultural positions, particularly those concerning classical religious teachings on the relations between men and women. Patriarchal understandings of religion and of the existential qualities of concepts of 'Muslim man' and 'Muslim woman' have been subjected to deconstruction and fundamental criticism.

Women's issues have also become one of the major political and theological agendas of MMI. They have written many books on women's issues and translated others from Arabic into Indonesian. Like other Indonesian mass organizations, MMI has a women's division, *an-Nisa Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia*, more commonly known as *an-Nisa*,[3] which is the primary place for women who are involved in the organization. Organizationally, *an-Nisa* is under 'Leader I'[4] whose responsibility is to implement policy.[5] The members of the Division consist of all MMI women. Many of them are wives or relatives of male members. The Division is always led by a woman. Some of these women have studied in *pesantren* and/or Islamic universities. Itsna Wiqayati, for example, is a former leader of the Yogyakarta branch. She is a graduate of the Department of Arabic Language and Literature at Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University in Yogyakarta.

Exploring MMI's teachings about the status and role of women is significant for understanding the persistence of patriarchal culture in a society where gender relationships have changed fundamentally in part as a result of the emergence of feminist movements led by women with both secular and Islamic educations. For example, in 2004, the Ministry of Religious Affairs introduced legislation which would have prohibited polygamy and promoted gender equality. The draft was compiled by a team which consisted of highly educated female and male scholars and was led by an Indonesian Muslim woman gender expert, Siti Musdah Mulia (Sri Saraswati 2004). This action immediately sparked strong resistance from the majority of Muslims, especially traditionalists and radicals, including MMI. Led by Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, radical organizations opposed the reforms, claiming that they deviated from the principles of Islam. The emergence of MMI and its positions on gender issues can be understood in part as a response to the presence of reform-oriented feminist voices in the public sphere.

Questions concerning religious fundamentalism have become even more salient since the tragedy of 11 September 2001. In post-9/11 Western discourse, Islam, or more particularly Islamic fundamentalism, is very often the primary object of attention and discussion: it immediately turns out to be the accused. The massive outpouring of anti-Islamic sentiment that immediately followed the event, and the assumed association of Islamic movements and terrorism, has served to further reaffirm their status as agents of dangerous irrationality (Mahmood 2005).

Control of women and maintaining the patriarchal system are central to fundamentalism. Wahhabism has come to symbolize Muslim fundamentalism because it is the official Islam of the ultra-conservative Saudi Arabian state. It is a major force in global Muslim discourse because of the efforts of the Saudi state and wealthy individuals who promote it worldwide. According to Wahhabi teachings, women should be segregated from men, have no access to public space and are inferior to men (Delong-Bas 2004). In Afghanistan under the Taliban, women were kept under house arrest, banned from attending school and prohibited from working outside the house (Moghissi 1999). They could not step outside their houses except in the company of a male relative. There are many other examples. MMI promotes an only slightly less restrictive variant of this ideology, elements of which are contested by the organization's female members.

Theorizing fundamentalism and feminism

Fundamentalisms and feminisms are among a growing number of ideological forces that attempt to deal with both individual and communal identities in global and local conditions, following the expansion of a global culture and the forces opposing it in the aftermath of decolonization (Moallem 2001). Islamic fundamentalism and Western feminism have become important discursive sites for the construction of new forms of global oppositions perpetuating the binary distinction between a barbaric, oppressive and patriarchal Muslim world and a civilized, tolerant and liberated West that was central to colonial discourse.

Bruce Lawrence (1989) characterizes fundamentalism as the affirmation of religious authority as the only holistic and absolute framework, admitting neither criticism nor reduction. It is expressed through the collective demand that specific creedal and ethical dictates derived from scripture be publicly recognized and legally enforced (Lawrence 1989: 27). Fundamentalists embrace scriptural authority as self-conscious advocates of anti-modernist values, in opposition to individuals and institutions that advocate Enlightenment values and wave the banner of secularism or modernism. Manning Nash (1991: 732–33) identifies eight features of fundamentalism in Southeast Asia:

1. Arguments based on literalist readings of scripture with little theological debate or interpretation;
2. Glorification and idealization of the past which it sees as the golden age of purity and as a model of contemporary society;
3. Attempts to create an ideal society based on Islamic tenets in the context of contemporary social realities;
4. Hierarchical networks whose leaders spread their ideologies and monitor the behaviour of their followers;
5. Opposition to modernity and the West, particularly its concepts of hedonism, materialism, secularism and self-indulgence;

6. A combination of anti-modernism with defense of ethnic identity;
7. Reliance on charismatic leaders to mobilize mass support; and
8. Their ideologies include theodicies that explain 'unjust suffering' that fundamentalists must endure.

It is essential to add opposition of local and global feminisms to this list. Fundamentalism is an instrumentally rational response to perceived grievances about the failure of modernity to meet religious needs. Islamic fundamentalism is a byproduct of modernity. It is a reaction against modernity, but more profoundly it is also an expression of modernity (Euben 1999). Fundamentalism can lead to violence in response to what are perceived existential threats posed by modernism, including symbolic violence such as discrimination against women, as well as physical violence. This is especially true when the state is weak and unable to establish effective administrative-legal structures to contain potentially violent political-religious actors (Hefner 2004).

Accordingly, many Western feminists theorize that women under fundamentalist orders are submissive, oppressed and used to uphold multiple forms of political, economic and cultural power. They are theorized as being powerless, secluded, merely objects, and the ultimate example of male fundamentalist oppression and exploitation (Metcalf 1990). Female fundamentalists are seen as pawns in a grand patriarchal plan who, if freed from bondage, would express their abhorrence for the traditional Islamic mores used to enchain them (Mahmood 2005). Women are segregated, excluded from paid employment and from most interaction with the outside world, at least if not accompanied by an adult male (Peach 2002).

Maryam Rajavi (2008) argues that for fundamentalists physiological traits are determining factors in the construction of value systems. Gender-based differences are used to justify discrimination and inevitably lead to enmity towards women. She believes that in the fundamentalists' view women are second-class citizens, cannot and must not have any place in leadership, governance, judicial affairs, and in general should be excluded from participation in the regulation of social life. She concludes that the fundamentalist perspective on gender relations is that women must be kept uninformed to make sure they are obedient (Rajavi 2008).

The project of Islamic fundamentalism imposes an exclusionary definition of the Muslim community. 'Proper' female behaviour is used to signify the difference between those who are members of the community and those who are not. Women are also seen as the cultural carriers of the group, who transmit its culture to future generations (Sahgal and Yuval-Davis 1992). In this framework, interpretations of religious texts (mainly of the Qur'an) regarding women function not only to regulate women's lives but also to order Islamic society as a whole through categories based on gender (Peach 2002).

Fundamentalists, including those of MMI, view feminism as an anti-Islamic Western ideology. They are convinced that feminists aim to obliterate true Islamic values and teachings, and will inevitably degrade women's status and

dignity. From the fundamentalists' perspective, feminism has led women to rebel against their natural tendencies as well as against religious norms. It causes them to revolt against the boundaries defining their status and role, neglect their primary responsibilities in the domestic sphere and eventually create *fitnah* or interpersonal and social disorder.

Feminism, according to one female member of MMI, spreads the misguided idea that traditional female roles subordinate women, promotes male domination and condemns Islamic *shari'ah* (Karimah 2005). The male editor of the MMI website explains that feminism is a jargon of extreme freedom and equality, which invites conflict about men's roles as leaders of their families. This leads to conflict as to whether the woman or the man should lead the family when women gain financial and managerial capacities. The conflict, according to the editor, leads to single parenthood, free sex, abortion and adoption. Islam, he believes, requires that the man be a leader (*qawwam*) for his woman or women (his wife or wives).

According to Minno Moallem (2001), fundamentalism is a regime of truth based on discourses identified with, or ordained by, God (taken metaphorically or literally) and binds its observers. It is characterized by an orientation to the past and the negation of modernity, democracy, progress and development. Meanwhile, Western egalitarian feminism came into existence claiming a subject position within the pervasive masculinism of modern liberal discourse and its paradigm of equality. Both are concerned with women's subjectivity and participation, and reject a feminine ideal characterized by passivity and powerlessness. They nevertheless came to very different conclusions as well as different solutions to problems that women face. For feminists, women's subjectivity and participation exists in women's individuality in a liberatory process of change and uncertainty. Fundamentalists understand women's subjectivity as devotion to the consolidation of a God-given community.

Conventional descriptions (Moghissi 1999) of women living under fundamentalist orders as voiceless and powerless do not capture the complexity of *an-Nisa*. Women under this fundamentalist order are in fact publicly active and have developed bargaining strategies that make them relatively powerful. Fundamentalist women also use feminist language in efforts to deconstruct, negotiate and eventually reconstruct their identities as Muslim women. There is, therefore, a hybridity combining fundamentalist and feminist thought and belief. The women of *an-Nisa* promote a fundamentalist-feminism emphasizing female agency in the fundamentalist transformative agenda.

A portrait of *Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia* and *an-Nisa*

Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia was officially established in August 2002 in Yogyakarta. Historically, MMI is rooted in the Darul Islam movement, which was founded during the revolutionary struggle against the Dutch in the 1940s. Unlike the secular nationalists who came to dominate the new Indonesian state, it recognized no legislation but the *shari'ah* (International Crisis Group

2005b). MMI became prominent in national and international political discourse almost immediately, because of reported links with Al-Qaeda and *Jama'ah Islamiyah*. MMI has been linked to the 'Christmas Bombs' in 2002, which were set off serially in Medan, Jakarta, Bandung, Ciamis and Mataram.

MMI's vision is the establishment of *shari'ah* (*tathbiq al-Shari'ah*) comprehensively within the life of Muslim society. Its mission is to struggle for the formal establishment of *shari'ah* in its entirety and without compromise (*kaffah*) at the level of the individual, family, society and nation (Awwas 2003). Methodologically, this group emphasizes literal and textual approaches to Islam. They believe that the authority of human reason or rationality in the structure of Islamic thought must be subordinated to *wahyu* (divine revelation) because of the limitation of human reason. Human reason should surrender to the authority of *wahyu* that comes from and embodies ultimate truth (Al-Anshari 2005).

An-Nisa's mission is to determine women's roles in the establishment of Islamic *shari'ah*, to build networks, and to plan and carry out activities in various regions (Markaz Pusat Majelis Mujahidin 2001). In doing so, *an-Nisa* conducts its own women-only meetings. All divisions of MMI hold their meetings separately according to their own needs, functions and responsibilities. Plenary meetings are held only when needed with an agreement from the general chairman and divisional chairs.

In 2005, *an-Nisa* had its own website and independently formulated strategies to spread its ideas online as well as through conventional media. The 2012 version of MMI's website (http://majelismujahidin.com/) no longer includes a section for *an-Nisa*, indicating that gender issues remain sensitive in the organization. The former *an-Nisa* website was informative and provocative. It enabled a broad audience to follow *an-Nisa's* activities and learn about its ideology and beliefs. The website also published articles concerning women's issues, gender and feminism. Male members of MMI wrote most of them. Later, I analyze the contribution of a female member to the website. The exclusivity of this group protects the identities of female members, thus I am restricted to interpreting this female member's ideas through her writing, without having access to knowledge about her background, age, education, ethnicity or influence in the organization.

According to a 2004 report by the *an-Nisa* Human Resources Commission (Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia 2005c) the group's objectives include:

1 Preparing and developing high-quality human resources for Muslim women devoted to the establishment of *shari'ah*;
2 Building strong faith (*akidah*) among Muslim women along with the continual improvement of the quality of belief (*iman*), knowledge and deeds;
3 Building a strong mentality of *Mujahidah* (woman warriors) which includes integrity, discipline, self confidence, commitment, courage to speak the truth and professionalism; and
4 Building Muslim women's work ethics in the name of Allah.

This list is written in very general language. It assumes, but does not explicate, the MMI positions on patriarchy and gender segregation. There are many Indonesian Muslim women who would not find the list of goals objectionable, but would strenuously object to MMI's more general positions.

Encountering feminist issues

MMI members are seriously concerned about women and gender issues. They publish books on women's issues (all written by men), the contents of which counter those written by progressive/modernist Muslims. A number of articles about women's issues used to be available on the *an-Nisa* website. Of seven articles, women wrote only two. In addition, other articles related partly to women's issues are accessible on the MMI website. Men wrote all of them. This is a discourse *about* women; it is not a women's discourse.

Dealing with the issue of emancipation, Shiddiq Al-Jawi (2006) explains that emancipation entails the concept of women's absolute freedom. His article was posted on the MMI website in 2006. He argues that emancipation promotes gender equality, which defines women and men as having exactly the same rights and responsibilities without any distinction or exception in clear opposition to Islamic principles. Irfan Awwas (1999: v), the General Chair of *Majelis Tanfidziyah*, further alleges that every time women demand emancipation and gender equity they engage in pornographic activities, because women do not have persuasive or attractive powers other than their bodies.

Awwas links career women with pornography and unrestrained sexual activity. He also describes career women as defiant, alienated from Islamic values, and suggests that they may suffer from psychological disorders. He states (1999: v):

1 They like to work outside their homes and become involved in male work;
2 They focus more on their careers than on family in order to obtain social status and personal achievement;
3 They do not like household roles or following their husbands' lead; and
4 They are melancholy people.

MMI consistently misrepresents Indonesian social realities to promote its own agenda.

Muhammad Thalib (1999), who replaced Abu Bakar Ba'asyir as *Amir Mujahidin* in 2008, argues that current global discourses about emancipation based on gender equality and equity are mistaken. In the name of emancipation, Thalib claims that some Muslims accuse Islam of limiting women's potential for improvement and freedom and for promoting gender discrimination. Thalib also believes that emancipation promotes a new idea, namely feminism, which is merely an illusion, and has terrible effects on women. The mission of feminism, according to him, is to give women limitless freedom and lead them to abandon their natural tendencies (Thalib 1999: 36). Feminism, Thalib

argues, has revolutionized the structure of women's thought and led them to abandon their natural roles as mothers and to become sexually ambiguous people.

Those who promote emancipation, according to Thalib (1999: 12), raise deceptively spectacular issues that could easily induce the spirit of rebellion. Thalib believes that feminists continually and systematically incite women to fight against their natural tendencies, jump over their boundaries, eradicate moral barriers and break religious demarcations and God's laws. He understands feminism as a force that marginalizes faithful women, depriving them of their rights as human beings (Thalib 1999: 12).

Thalib argues that feminists spread the idea that stay-at-home women are those whose existence and life are so fettered that their personalities will never develop so that they accept oppression by men. He also tries to show that a stay-at-home woman is not in the terrible state described by those who promote emancipation. He believes that the home is the best and safest place for women. Thalib and other MMI members use expressions such as 'a woman is a queen of her family' to stress women's important roles in domestic affairs and support their contention that women's roles in society should be restricted to the domestic sphere. To support his view on the supposedly dreadful effects of emancipation, Thalib (1999: 16–17) describes how career or professional women have created long-lasting dilemmas for themselves and society. They, in Thalib's view, have to accept a double burden, since they have to go outside their homes, become breadwinners, struggle and compete with men in the workplace and at the same time have to take care of their household. He constructs his argument against a nearly non-existent stereotype, because almost all middle-class Indonesian women have household help.

Thalib is also critical of women who, he claims, take men's opportunities in the workplace. These women, according to Thalib, are responsible for the high percentage of jobless men, creating competition between men and women. In this situation, he argues, the job and responsibility mechanism in both the family and the society have become confused. Jobless adult men do not have the courage to get married due to their lack of material capacity to maintain the family and, consequently, turn to adulterous lifestyles to fulfil their biological needs. At the same time, career women, who prefer not to get married, choose to have their sexual needs met outside marriage. Thalib does not provide any evidence to support his claims. This fundamentalist critique of modernity and women's emancipation is not particularly relevant for Indonesia, where the idea of the 'working woman' is not a recent development. Women have traditionally played major roles in commerce, especially in traditional markets, and agriculture. Among upper-class Javanese (the largest ethnic group in Indonesia), it is often considered to be the woman's duty to make money and the man's to maintain family honour. This is a gender-based division of labour, but one quite different from the ones MMI caricatures or from the Islamic alternative it advocates.

The MMI webmaster argues that in the name of gender equality the Indonesian government uses women as commodities and economic resources

through prostitution and entertainment businesses and by sending them abroad as workers. This, the webmaster declares, results in the destruction of family structure and the mushrooming of serial marriage and divorce, of living together without getting married, and of lesbianism and homosexuality. These lifestyles, the webmaster asserts, are trendy and legally accepted. Again, the webmaster provides no data to support his contentions.

MMI presents its understanding of Islam as the only possible solution to dire social problems and moral decline that are the result of the absence of women in the family, their participation in the public arena and the spread of the idea of emancipation and other types of feminist ideas. Like other MMI members, a female contributor to the website, Intishorul Karimah (2005) believes that *sharia'h*, as an ideology, has the capacity to solve all social problems including those of women, men, family, society and the state. The establishment of *shari'ah*, according to her, will fulfil human needs, establish security and dignity, and at the same time will eliminate all kinds of injustice, social gaps and boundless freedom.

The author of *Nasehat Praktis untuk Muslimah Shalihah* (Practical Advice for Pious Muslim Women) (Jarillah 2002: 28) declares that Islam devotes intense attention to women's roles in every sphere of life and gives women the most respectful position before God and human beings. This book explains that only Islam can save women from their ignorant behaviour and raise them above tendencies to glorify worldly life and sexual display. Emancipation, feminism, gender equality and partnership, thus, are against Islam and should not be attached to it, because Muslim women are obligated to follow Islam in a totalistic way. For MMI, Islam presumes a binary distinction between female and male roles and spheres of action and agency that is essential for the maintenance of morality and social order. *Shari'ah* defines and preserves these boundaries.

Division of labour and women's natural tendenicies and functions

It is evident through her writing that Karimah (2005) believes that Islam bestows women and men the same rights and responsibilities. This concept of equality, however, recognizes particular differentiations between the two sexes that she believes are supported by *dalil* (proof texts) from the Qur'an and Hadith. Karimah takes it for granted that God has established natural laws defining different roles and functions for men and women. Natural law, for example, regulates women's maternal functions. These include maternity, pregnancy, giving birth, breastfeeding and child-care functions. Menstruation is also another natural consequence of being female that cannot be altered.

Thalib (1999: 14–15) argues that these sociological differences are rooted in biology as well as religion and that MMI's understanding of *shari'ah* recognizes basic biological conditions. Women are different from men because of menstruation that disturbs their health and mental states and, therefore, during this period they are not able to work as well as in their normal condition.

Women, he adds, have to give birth to children, and the days during and following delivery are the most critical times for women both physiologically and psychologically. After the delivery, he argues, women have to breastfeed their babies and this task can only be accomplished by a stay-at-home mother. Instant milk, babysitters and household helpers cannot replace the function of breastfeeding. Men have no such troubles or barriers. This discourse blurs the distinction between the social and the biological. Based on their understanding of women's natural biological functions, MMI members, both female and male, share the idea that these natural functions result in the fundamental distinction between men's and women's roles. Women's primary place is in their homes and their major roles relate to domestic affairs.

According to Fauzan al-Anshari (2005), the coordinator of the Data and Information Division of MMI, women's location in the domestic sphere reflects the natural condition of being a wife and mother, and of softness, great compassion and serenity. It does not, therefore, have any relation to the issues of discrimination. Likewise, Thalib (1999: 112) affirms that women and men are naturally, physiologically and psychologically very different. Women, according to him, are physiologically softer, more tender and milder than men, so that they are able to control their emotions and be patient enough to take care of and educate children. Karimah (2005) similarly believes that women's role in the domestic sphere is associated intimately with her natural functions that result from the consequence of getting married: a woman's role is that of wife and mother.

Anshari shares with Thalib and other MMI members the view that men are physically stronger and nimbler than women, which makes them able to act quicker and effectively compete and struggle to solve life's difficulties and problems. Man, with his physical power, is capable of defending himself and his family from all kinds of threats and dangers. Similarly, Karimah maintains that women and men naturally have particular distinctions and that ignoring them will abolish women's potencies, capabilities and specific roles and, thus, is against human nature.

MMI members believe that women's prestige and status derive from their roles as mothers and wives and that a married woman is the 'queen' and manager of her husband's household. MMI books describe a woman as a queen who manages the household, which is also a school in which children come to know the world. MMI books claim that women will be asked in the hereafter about how they performed their responsibilities of taking care of their family and children, not about their careers or university degrees. This suggests that those who do not conform to MMI behavioural norms will burn in hell.

MMI relies on the writings of the Saudi Arabian Wahhabi scholar Shalih bin Fauzan bin Abdullah Al-Fauzan to support these positions. He argues that women's participation in building society is manifested through their responsibilities inside the closed home, which is suitable for their natural characteristics and wherein women are protected from destruction. Domestic

work, ranging from getting pregnant to cleaning the floor, is equal to being a breadwinner (Al-Fauzan 2005: 144). From this point of view, MMI members seem to conclude that women will lose their dignity and religion once they go outside their home to work.

Abdullah bin Jarillah Al Jarillah (2002: 19–35), another Saudi Arabian scholar whose works have been translated from Arabic into Indonesian by MMI members, describes the rights of a husband over his wife or wives as follows:

1 She must obey him;
2 She must give her entire body to the husband anytime he wishes;
3 She must educate her children well; and
4 She must never say bad words and get angry with the children, particularly in front of the husband, because it could hurt his feelings.

A woman's rights in the family include receiving economic support from her husband, which includes clothing, food and shelter, and to receive education about Islamic teachings, especially those concerning proper female comportment from her husband who should order his wife/wives and children to faithfully perform their prayers. Husbands must not permit their wives to buy pornographic magazines, read porno stories or make friends with immoral women. In this scheme, the concept of men's and women's rights is seemingly deduced from the concept of male superiority: men as the controllers and decision-makers.

MMI authors (Jarillah 2002: 20; Thalib 1999: 49–50) argue that the Qur'an delineates the command for women to stay home by referring to *al-Ahzab*, verses 32 and 33:

> O wives of the Prophet! You are not like any other women. If you keep your duty (to Allah), then be not soft in speech, lest he in whose heart is a disease (of hypocrisy, or evil desire for adultery, etc.) should be moved with desire, but speak in an honourable manner.
>
> And stay in your houses, and do not display yourselves like that of the times of ignorance, and perform *As-Salat* (*Iqamat-as-Salat*), and give *Zakat* and obey Allah and His Messenger. Allah wishes only to remove *Ar-Rijs* (evil deeds and sins, etc.) from you.

Thalib argues that these verses were directed to the Prophet Muhammad's wives, but he also states that the Prophet's wives are the best role models for Muslim women, indicating that the commands in fact apply to all Muslim women, and not just the Prophet's wives. Based on these verses, both Jarillah and Thalib proclaim that women are obligated to stay at their husband's home, never leaving the home without his permission. This interpretation contradicts those of progressive Muslims who perceive the words 'O ye wives of the Prophet! *Ye are not like any other women*' (my emphasis) as a clear indicator that the verse is not for all Muslims. It also demonstrates the

inconsistencies of MMI interpretations of the Qur'an. If MMI members were consistent in employing their method and firmly believe that the highest rank of *tafsir* (interpretation) is *tafsir ayah bi al-ayah* (interpreting verse by verse), they could not come to the conclusion that the verse bans every woman from stepping outside their homes. This interpretation would, however, contradict the binary thinking characteristic of MMI.

Referring to this simple pattern, MMI rejects totally the idea of woman's emancipation, feminism or gender equality, delineating a clear-cut 'Islamic' division of labour for women and men. Some MMI female members, however, seem not to accept the concept of women's domestication in its entirety, even though they accept the home as their primary place. By advocating even limited feminine agency outside the domestic sphere, they blur the binary opposition central to MMI's worldview.

Women's different roles and responsibilities, Karimah (2005) believes, do not lead to the diminishing of their dignity because it is *taqwa* (piety) which differentiates humans. The differentiation of roles and duties does not indicate the distinction of dignity, but rather because of man's abilities to take greater responsibilities. Thus, Karimah, as well as her male colleagues, believes that Islam perfectly regulates human relations in a very understandable and balancing way. It limits women's rights in the family but at the same time forbids men from doing physical violence. Yet, a man is still allowed to beat his wife, as they believe that the law regulates it, as long it is not on her face or vital parts of her body, in order to educate her so that she will not disobey him. In cases when men do not treat their wives well and quarrels cannot be resolved, Karimah argues that the wife may propose a divorce.

MMI members believe that Islam – as they understand it – has regulated the division of labour between man and woman perfectly, indisputably and unchangeably, and in balance so as to create a blissful family and society. The man is the breadwinner, al-Anshari (2005) argues, who has responsibility to provide both material and immaterial needs of his family, and the woman is the householder whose responsibility is to prepare the children to become a strong and prestigious generation.

Negotiating space and authority in public life

Discourse about women in public life is very challenging for MMI members, particularly because women in Indonesia have relatively the same access as men do to enter the workforce and occupy strategic positions. MMI members perceive that women in Indonesia merely imitate a Western way of life by entering the workforce. Thalib (1999: 114) states that adopting Western lifestyles and admitting that women can work side by side with men in every workplace and job position is against the Qur'an and against *shari'ah*. It also annihilates, he contends, the concept of man's leadership over woman, which, he explains, derives its legitimacy from the Qur'an. Thalib also argues that men's leadership or men's responsibility over women is based on two factors.

First, men are naturally more capable of working outside the home than women.[6] Second, men are obligated to fulfil the family needs.

Shalih bin Fauzan bin Abdullah al-Fauzan (2005) asserts that in the family the husband is the leader and the wife is the leader of her husband's children. Inside her home, a woman has right to lead, give orders, forbid and become the 'queen' who has to be obeyed by the children. The concept of a woman as leader and queen in the mind of MMI members apparently refers to women's relationship with children. Women are the managers of the children in the family, which is under men's control. Thalib further affirms that the verse cited above also guarantees that women do not need to work.

Al-Fauzan (2005: 23) claims that only sick Westernized Muslims persist in persuading women to leave their homes to be men's partners in business, working side by side with them. They convince women to leave their primary tasks at home and, then, their husbands find helpers to educate their children and manage their households. In the end, it will create slandering, criminality and other social problems. He shares the idea that a woman, however, can work outside her home under certain conditions. The first of these is that the work is extremely important and must be performed by a woman and that it is not to be done together with a man – examples include being a kindergarten teacher, a teacher at a special school for women or a nurse for female patients. The second is that her husband, father or brothers cannot meet their responsibilities of fulfilling the family's needs. The third is that the work is part-time and will not interfere with the woman's primary obligation that is to take care of her household. The fourth is that a woman gets permission from her husband, father or brothers, and finally, that she must work separately from men in order to protect her dignity and save her and the society from moral depravation (Thalib 1999: 108–109). Jarillah (2002: 32) proclaims that woman can only step outside her home when she has an urgent need and wears appropriate clothing: thick, non-colourful, loose and long clothing, covering her feet, together with a long veil covering her neck and bosom, and the *cadar* (a face cover with an opening for the eyes).

Karimah (2005), however, has a different point of view from her male colleagues and their Saudi mentors: she confidently announces that the law recognizes the equality between men and women. She highlights that human beings, both women and men, are created as God's representatives on earth and that the only regulation that can save humanity is *shari'ah*. She argues that women, therefore, have to work hand in hand with men in the society, because society neither solely consists of women or men, but is rather a human society. Men and women are religiously obligated to participate actively in building the society by doing good deeds and avoiding infidelity. She believes this is mandated in the following Qur'anic verses:

> And the believers, men and women, are protecting friends one of another; they enjoin the right and forbid the wrong, and they establish worship and they pay the poor-due, and they obey Allah and His messenger. As

> for these, Allah will have mercy on them. Lo! Allah is Mighty, Wise (At-Taubah [9]: 71).
>
> O ye who believe! Profane not Allah's monuments nor the Sacred Month nor the offerings nor the garlands, nor those repairing to the Sacred House, seeking the grace and pleasure of their Lord. But when ye have left the sacred territory, then go hunting (if ye will). And let not your hatred of a folk who (once) stopped your going to the inviolable place of worship to seduce you to transgress; but help ye one another unto righteousness and pious duty. Help not one another unto sin and transgression, but keep your duty to Allah. Lo! Allah is severe in punishment (Al-Maa'idah [5]: 2).

Karimah maintains that God creates human beings and gives them human potencies regardless of gender differentiation. She refers to the Qur'an (Al-Hujaraat [49]: 13):

> O mankind! Lo! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo! the noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct. Lo! Allah is Knower, Aware (Al-Hujuraat [49]: 13).

Women and men as human beings, Karimah (2005) insists, share similarities. Many verses in the Qur'an and Hadith, she believes, point to the equality of men and women. In an attempt to bring MMI's mission to establish *shari'ah* as a reality, Karimah further argues that women also have to search for knowledge in order to understand God's laws. Karimah, however, explicates that acquiring religious knowledge is an individual obligation, but acquiring worldly knowledge is not. Karimah shows that female Muslim thinkers have been well known since the early days of Islam both in the field of religious and worldly studies.

Tracing the history of women in the early years of Islam, Karimah demonstrates that Aisyah, the daughter of the first *khalifa* (a title for one who holds the highest authoritative position in Islam, including in Sufi orders), Abu Bakar, and the mother of all Muslims, is a transmitter of Hadith who became incredibly famous. She collected 2,220 Hadith from the Prophet. Hafsah, the daughter of the second *khalifa*, Umar bin Khattab, she argues, was renowned for her intelligence and reading and writing skills at a time when most Muslims were illiterate. In the field of politics, Karimah believes that several Muslim women's names were also prominent. Among them were Fatimah, the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad, Aisyah, the daughter of Abu Bakar, and Atikah, the daughter of Yazid bin Muawiyah. There were also Muslim women eye doctors such as Zaenab and Ummul Hasan, the daughter al Qadli Abi Ja'far.

Contrary to the men's perspective, Karimah insists that a woman can choose whatever work she wants to do. Similarly, Karimah believes that

women can relatively easily enter all working places that men are able to enter. Yet working for women is permissible (*mubah*) and is not obligatory (*wajib*), as it is for men, because the man is the breadwinner of the family. She, however, has to give her primary duties precedence over other things and firmly maintain the laws regarding how she dresses (veiling), communicates with men, obtains her husband's permission and other required laws.

Karimah also argues that women have the same role as men in the political arena, especially when the politics is intended to maintain the Islamic society. They are obligated to be informed and struggle for society's wellbeing, and are compelled to be activists in political parties, to criticize and correct rulers who deviate from God's laws and to struggle for a better society and better lives for women. This political perspective, Karimah believes, is essentially different from the liberal one that merely aims to achieve high worldly positions without any attempt to take responsibilities to God.

Karimah, nonetheless, acknowledges that there is no question that women and men are different; that difference is determined by God and is regulated by *shari'ah*. She agrees with Anshar's view that male leadership is an inevitable social fact that must be accepted, because one of the requirements for being a leader is to be male. Woman in this schema, according to Karimah and MMI ideology, can never be a leader both in domestic and public spheres. The laws have made it clear that female leaders will never be successful, and that societies under a female ruler will never be fortunate. Karimah believes that the proper role for women in public life is advocating for leaders and struggling for the realization of social wellbeing and prosperity. In line with MMI's political agenda, particularly the goal of establishing *shari'ah*, which calls for the replacement of existing secular laws and democratization with theocracy, MMI did not accept Megawati Sukarnoputri (the daughter of Sukarno) as the first female president of Indonesia (Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia 2005a).

An *an-Nisa* workshop conducted in 2004 supported Karimah's views concerning women's participation in the public arena. The workshop recommended that Muslim women be involved actively in society both in its narrow and wider meanings (Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia 2005b). Society in its narrow meaning includes the family and neighbourhood. In this context women's role is to promulgate Islamic teachings through study clubs. Women's role in the society in its wider scope is to develop support for the establishment of *shari'ah*, to respond to current social issues and to occupy strategic positions in existing social organizations. At the political level, Muslim women must support MMI in their struggle for reinstating the 'Jakarta Charter' (*Piagam Jakarta*) and work to counter those who oppose this goal. The struggle for the Jakarta Charter has been one of the defining characteristics of political Islam in Indonesia since the 1940s. It added the clause 'with the obligation, for its adherents to practise the *Shari'ah* (*dengan kewajiban menjalankan Shari'ah bagi pemeluknya*)' to the first of *Pancasila*'s five principles. It was originally included, but subsequently dropped from,

Pancasila because of objections by religious minorities and politically secular Muslims.

Karimah's standpoints, as well other *an-Nisa* members', as illustrated in the results of their workshop, endorse freedom for women in the public arena in opposition to the male members' convictions. All of the members share the concept of leadership, but for women members the concept does not lead to the seclusion of women. Women accept the position that they cannot be leaders but insist that they can participate *freely* (my emphasis) in workplaces and in political organizations and activities.

Karimah's reasoning, however, falls into inconsistency. She assertively proclaims women's freedom: a woman can choose her own work and the places she wants to go because she is obligated to be God's vicegerent. Conversely, she declares that a woman must focus on her primary duties and must obtain her husband's permission to do anything. It seems that Karimah stands in a dilemma: she wishes to declare and prove that Islam gives women freedom, but her belief in textual literalism and limited understanding of Islam drives her to define freedom in a limited and restricted sense: freedom under men's control.

Conclusion

Karimah and her female colleagues' perceptions of women's role present a portrait of women under fundamentalist orders and *pesantren* associated with them that contrasts with prevailing views of such women as powerless, secluded and objectified by men. The women in *an-Nisa Majelis Mujahidin* are, in fact, relatively powerful in the sense that they negotiate their space in the public arena. They accept the concept of male leadership but define their status as advisers to male leaders and create roles for themselves in society and the public domain. They are not secluded and play significant roles in society and in the struggle to create what they believe to be a better future for Indonesia. In this sense they reject the Saudi Arabian-inspired models provided by the male leadership.

They use feminist language to deconstruct, negotiate and eventually reconstruct their identities as Muslim women. They employ the language, concepts and ideas of equality, freedom and patriarchy, but at the same time deconstruct them and negotiate their place in society based on their perceptions that women, as God's vicegerents, share the responsibility to be present in public space as well as in their houses, and their concept of equality in difference.

Both fundamentalism and feminism are regimes of truth, as Moallem (2001) states. Fundamentalists promote God's 'single truth' to revolt against modernity, democracy, progress and development, and Western egalitarian feminism claims a subject position within the pervasive masculinism of modern liberal discourse and its paradigm of equality. They both are reacting against modernity. There is, therefore, a hybridity of fundamentalism and feminism.

This chapter has supported Lawrence's (1989) and Moallem's (2001) views that fundamentalism in a byproduct of modernity. Fundamentalisms and feminisms attempt to deal with both individual and communal identities in global and local conditions, and criticize the failure of modernity. Like post-modernism, fundamentalists' paradoxical relationship to modernity represents an attempt to move beyond what they perceive as uncivilized modernity, in a way that it is simultaneously parasitic upon it. Fundamentalists and feminists are two competing powers criticizing modernity and the dark side of modern rationalism.

Notes

1 Manji is a controversial figure. She is a strident critic of fundamentalism and an acknowledged lesbian. In May 2012 she toured Indonesia promoting her most recent book, *Allah, Liberty and Love: the courage to reconcile faith and freedom*. Public appearances were cancelled in several locations because of security concerns.
2 It consists of two Sanskrit words, *panca* (five) and *sila* (principle), as it comprises five inseparable and interrelated principles: (1) belief in the one and only God (*Ketuhanan yang Maha Esa*); (2) a just and civilized humanity (*Kemanusiaan yang Adil dan Beradab*); (3) the unity of Indonesia (*Persatuan Indonesia*); (4) democracy guided by the inner wisdom in the unanimity arising out of deliberations amongst representatives (*Kerakyatan yang Dipimpin oleh Hikmat Kebijaksanaan dalam Permusyawataran/Perwakilan*); and (5) social justice for the whole of the people of Indonesia (*Keadilan Sosial bagi Seluruh Rakyat Indonesia*).
3 *An-Nisa* is an Arabic term that literally means 'women', but here refers to one of the departments under the structure of the MMI organization.
4 MMI is divided into two divisions, *Ahlul Halli Wal 'Aqdi* (AHWA, or the Righteous Decision Makers) and *Lajnah Tanfidziyah.* The responsibility of AHWA, formerly led by Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, is to carry out the decisions of the congress (the highest division) and decide the general policy of the MMI, including the programmes, while the main job description of the *Lajnah Tanfidziyah* is to implement AHWA's decisions. The *Lajnah* is divided into several Divisions, which are structurally under three different leaders: Leader I, Leader II and Leader III.
5 Under Leader I are the Division of Economics and Finance (*Qism Iqtishadiyah was Tamwil*) and the Division of Women (*Qism an-Nisa*).
6 According to Thalib (1999), women have many physical and psychological obstacles due to the effects of naturally having menstruation, of pregnancy, of giving birth and of breast-feeding and taking care of babies.

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Part IV

Sexuality, *shari'ah* and power

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8 The tawdry tale of 'Syech' Puji and Luftiana

Child marriage and polygamy on the boundary of the *pesantren* world

Mark Woodward and Inayah Rohmaniyah

This chapter concerns the practice of, and discourses concerning, child marriage and polygamy in contemporary Indonesia and the religious, social and political contexts in which they are located. It focuses on the tale of Pujiono Cahyo Widayanto, who is more commonly known as Widayanto, and his child bride, Umi Hani Luftiana Ulfa, that reverberated through the Indonesian media for more than a year (2008–9). Widayanto is a wealthy businessman from a traditional *santri* (a pious Muslim student who studies or lives in a *pesantren*), but not *pesantren* (a traditional Islamic boarding school for the study of the Qur'an, Hadith and other classical Islamic texts), background. As one element of a strategy to transform wealth into cultural and religious prestige or, in Pierre Bourdieu's (1991) terms, to exchange financial for symbolic capital, he began calling himself Syech and established a *pesantren*. Vocal support for and practice of child marriage and polygamy were also elements of this failed strategy. Widayanto's flagrant disregard and contempt for the judicial system led to his arrest and conviction on child abuse charges in 2009.

This story is located on the fringes of the *pesantren* world. Widayanto did not study in a *pesantren*. He has neither the educational qualifications nor the ancestry to be considered a *kyai* (male Muslim leader). Until recently, both early marriage and polygamy were common in *pesantren*. Both are still practised, but have come under increasing criticism, especially from younger members of *kyai* families as well as from the public at large.

Widayanto and Luftiana are icons in a high-stakes symbolic and legal drama pitting socially and religiously conservative groups against progressive Muslims advocating reform of Islamic Family Law, the empowerment of women and modernity. Widayanto is an iconic figure in this struggle for three reasons: his flamboyant style, his defiant disregard and contempt for Indonesian civil law and the fact that he combined polygamy and child marriage in a single package.

At the time of their marriage on 8 August 2008, Widayanto, a successful businessman and erstwhile political and religious leader, was aged 43. Luftiana, who had only recently graduated from primary school, was 11 years old. Widayanto was married at the time to a woman who was then aged 25. He subsequently announced plans to marry two even younger girls, aged 7 and 9

years. This tale attracted nationwide attention because Widayanto sought out and courted the media. For many observers it is a lurid, grotesque tale of outrageous, perverted criminal behaviour. Others see it as a tale of the valiant defence of Islamic principles against the onslaught of secularism, modernity and liberalism. Progressive Muslims see 'Syech' as a paedophile and Luftiana as a victim of child abuse. Widayanto's supporters see her as the victim of overzealous police who have torn a young bride from her husband. Their story became a cause célèbre for Islamists and other supporters of traditional *shari'ah*-based family law, as well as for women's groups, some of which are *pesantren*-based, and other progressive Muslims who support efforts to bring family law matters under uniform national jurisdiction, strictly enforcing laws prohibiting child marriage and restricting or outlawing polygamy.

Islamist organizations, especially Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS), Indonesia's largest and most influential Islamist political party (Hasan 2009; Woodward 2008), were caught in the middle because they advocate both conservative understandings of *shari'ah* and modernity, and because they appeal to an urban middle-class constituency that generally opposes polygamy and child marriage. Religiously conservative but politically progressive Muslim organizations including Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) recognize the religious legitimacy of the marriage, but hold that in Indonesia civil law predominates in domains other than ritual performance. They have also challenged Widayanto's religious credentials and his right to use the honorific 'Syech'.

Much of the rhetoric surrounding the Widayanto case is hyperbolic and emotionally charged. His detractors describe him as a narcissistic paedophile and claim that cases such as this one are among the consequences of increasing Saudi Arabian Wahhabi influence on Indonesian Islam. His defenders claim that his actions are in accordance with Islamic Law and in keeping with the practice of the Prophet Muhammad. In this chapter we locate the Widayanto case in the contexts of Indonesian, and more specifically Javanese, history and culture, and locate the issues it turns on in the larger transnational Muslim discourse about modernity, women's empowerment and family law. We begin with a discussion of what is known about Luftiana and Widayanto. We move from there to a brief account of the place of polygamy and child marriage in Islam and contemporary Muslim discourse and from there to a discussion of the Indonesian, and more specifically Javanese, cultural contexts in which the tale of Widayanto and Luftiana is located. We conclude with an assessment of the significance of the case in contemporary Indonesian cultural politics, in which social practices including polygamy and child marriage, and symbolic representations of them, have become significant elements of Islamist ideology and identity.

In contemporary Indonesia, unlike that of either the early republican period (1945–66) or the New Order (1966–98), women's organizations and other socially progressive Muslim groups opposing polygamy and child marriage face new challenges. In the past, those supporting these practices were primarily supporters of socially and/or religiously conservative positions. While

these groups continue to oppose efforts to reform Islamic Family Law, contemporary Islamists support polygamy and child marriage as elements of a much larger transformative agenda. Their goal is to establish Indonesia as an Islamic state and/or society in which all aspects of social life are regulated by a narrow, literalist understanding of *shari'ah*. Polygamy has also come to figure significantly in media discourse concerning the construction of modern Muslim identities in which the manipulation and articulation of publicly visible symbols is an overriding concern. For some Indonesians associated with this movement, polygamy has become a symbol of male power (in both the social and spiritual senses), the Islamic family and of personal piety. For women located in these social contexts, accepting polygamous marriages is understood as one way of accepting *shari'ah*.

We conclude with the observation that child marriage and polygamy are symbolically significant because they are both uncommon and generally unpopular and because adopting them as symbols of Muslim identity establishes clear social and symbolic boundaries between culturally, if not politically, radical Islamist groups and the Indonesian Muslim majority, whom Islamists define as being, at least, somewhat less than fully Muslim (see Rohmaniyah, this volume). To oppose polygamy and child marriage is now, almost by definition, to oppose this larger agenda. The reverse is, however, not the case, because both were accepted practices in some segments of Indonesian society prior to the advent of contemporary Islamist social movements.

The case of Widayanto and Luftiana is one element of a much larger struggle concerning the meaning and ownership of the concepts 'Islam' and 'Muslim' in contemporary Indonesia. It is also an example of a rearguard defence of pre-modern cultural practices against the onslaught of elements of modernity that are at most tangentially related to religion. Delayed marriage is one element of the demographic transition that has accompanied modernity, urbanization and industrialization wherever it has occurred (Jones *et al.* 1998; Kirk 1996). In almost all pre-modern societies, women are typically married in their early to mid-teens, shortly after the onset of puberty. Increased participation in the formal sector labour force, and the need and desire for formal education seem to lead almost inevitably to increases in the average age of first marriages and falling birth rates. The Indonesian case clearly demonstrates that there can be a significant lag between social practice and cultural norms. Over the past several decades the average age of marriage has risen and birth rates fallen substantially (Jones and Gubhaju 2008). There are, however, many who consider early marriage and large families to be desirable for cultural as well as religious reasons. In this respect, Widayanto and his supporters are clearly reactionaries, in the literal sense of the term.

Widayanto and Luftiana

Widayanto is a self-made man (Tempo 2008). He comes from a poor village family in Central Java. He showed signs of ambition at an early age, attended

a local college and is a certified elementary school teacher. After completing his education he moved to Jakarta, because he was unable to find suitable employment. Initially he worked as a bus conductor. This is a poorly paid, menial job. In the late 1980s he began a successful career selling and later publishing Islamic books.

In 1991 he returned to his home village and established *PT Sinar Lendoh Terang* (Silenter), a publishing firm that specializes in Arabic Calligraphy. This venture was hugely successful and now exports prints and Islamic art works to other Southeast Asian countries and the Middle East. Widayanto is extremely wealthy, especially by Indonesian standards. His net worth is said to be approximately £6.5 million (US$10 million). He has attempted to use wealth to establish himself as a political and religious leader. In the late 1990s, he became the head of his native village. In 2005, he ran unsuccessfully for Bupati (District Head) of Semarang, the capital of the province of Central Java as the candidate of Partai Amanat Nasional, the Muslim-based political party founded by Muhammadiyah leader Amien Rais.[1] He staged demonstrations when his bid was unsuccessful.

He also established a *pesantren* that he named Pesantren Miftahul Jannah Pujiono (Pujiono's Key to Heaven Islamic School). The name 'Miftahul Jannah Pujiono' is more than somewhat presumptuous. It suggests that attending the school is a way to secure a place in paradise and that Widayanto is the *juru kunci* (keeper of the keys) of Heaven. In 2008, he claimed to have approximately 1,000 students, despite his limited religious credentials. The school is unusual in that there is no tuition, and room and board are provided without cost for all students.[2] At approximately the same time he began to refer to himself as Syech Puji, despite the fact that he has only a basic religious education.

Widayanto's positions on polygamy, early marriage, and his view that only *shari'ah* should be applied in family law matters, resemble those of many Indonesian Islamists, but also resonate with those of traditional conservative Muslims (see Rohmaniyah and Rahayu, both this volume). In other respects his religious views are very different from those of neo-Wahhabi Islamists who figure significantly in Indonesian politics. He engages in a variety of devotional practices characteristic of popular Sufism, the purpose of which is to secure worldly benefits. He attributes his business success to religious practices that Indonesian Islamists influenced by Saudi Arabian Wahhabi teachings consider to be *shirk* (the association of other beings and powers with God) and *kufarat* (unbelief). He justifies his marriage to Luftiana by reference to this same set of religious beliefs and practices as well as to Islamic law.

In a 2008 interview, Widayanto stated that before opening his business in 1991, he performed austerities and ritual devotions for eighteen months (SciForums 2008). He explained,

> Because I wanted to be successful in my business I performed *Wirid* and recited *Salawat Nariyah* starting at midnight and continued without

> sleeping until dawn for eighteen months. I did this following the advice of Mbah Mad (KH. Achmad Abdul Haq) of Pesantren Watucongol in Mutilan.

Wirid is the practice of reciting verses from the Qur'an in the hope that God will grant a request. *Salawat Nariyah* is a prayer of intercession that refers to the ways in which God blessed the Prophet Muhammad and removed difficulties from his path. It requests similar types of blessing for those performing it. It is widely believed that those who recite this text 4,444 times will realize their desires. Wahhabi- and Salafi-oriented Islamists consider both practices to be *shirk*.

Founded in 1879, Pesantren Watucongol is among the oldest in Java. It is known as a centre for the teaching and practice of Sufism. KH. Achmad Abdul Haq (1932–2010) was a charismatic figure known for his healing and other spiritual powers. He was a spiritual adviser to cabinet ministers, business and political leaders, including former Indonesian president Megawati Sukarnoputri. It is clear from Widayanto's reference to this school that he has strong ties to the mystical variant of Islam, and to a sub-variant of that tradition concerned with the use of mystical practice for worldly purposes. Wahhabi- and Salafi-oriented Muslims reject this interpretation of Islam on theological grounds. Many traditionalist Muslims consider it to be unethical and a sign that those who practise it are consumed by *nafsu* (passion).

Widayanto explained that he balanced this devotional programme with hard work and by making substantial charitable donations. While he was building his business he periodically conducted a type of voluntary fast called *nglempus*. This is to refrain from eating, drinking and sleeping for a period of days, with the intent of attaining a particular goal. Widayanto stated that he periodically conducted this fast for periods ranging from three to eleven days. This practice is common among traditional Javanese Muslims at all levels of society. Villagers, university students, politicians and businesspeople, as well as *pesantren* students, engage in it. He also claims to have performed even more strenuous austerities that he would not discuss. Taken together, this evidence points to the conclusion that the quest for *kesaktian* (spiritual power) is an important element of his religious life.

Prior to her marriage to Widayanto, Luftiana was an entirely anonymous primary school student. She is said to be very intelligent and, according to her teachers, to have been the best student in her class. Judging from photographs she is physiologically mature for her age. She is precisely the sort of young girl who some elite Javanese men have traditionally sought as wives or concubines. Before her marriage to Widayanto she is said to have mentioned obtaining a higher education and making enough money to send her parents on the *Hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca) as being her goals in life. Many young, ambitious Indonesian Muslims have similar goals. After marrying Widayanto she stopped attending school. One of her teachers described her as being mentally and spiritually broken (Misterionline 2008a).

Polygamy and child marriage: global and Islamic contexts

Questions concerning family law are central issues in religious, social and political discourse in many contemporary Muslim societies (Abou el Fadl 2002; An-Na'im 2002; Esposito 2002; Lawrence 2000). Family law was one of the few aspects of *shari'ah* that was not abrogated by colonial states and also the one that touches the lives of most Muslims most directly. For both of these reasons it has become a potent source of Muslim identity and, consequently, an often bitterly contested issue in post-colonial Muslim societies. Abdullahi An-Na'im (2002: xi–xii) puts it this way:

> IFL (Islamic Family Law) has become for most Muslims the symbol of their Muslim identity, the hard irreducible core of what it means to be a Muslim today. This is precisely because IFL is the main aspect of *Shari'ah* that is believed to have successfully resisted displacement by European codes during the colonial period and survived various degrees or forms of secularization of the state and its institutions in many Islamic countries.

Debates concerning family law are rooted in more general controversies about how the Qur'an and Hadith (traditions concerning the words and acts of the Prophet Muhammad) are to be interpreted. Kalid Abdou el Fadl (2002) suggests that two general hermeneutic strategies inform a wide range of theological and political debates, including those concerning family law, in the contemporary Muslim world. One views the scriptural corpus of Islam as an 'open text' that encourages, and indeed requires, creative exegesis. The other understands this same body of materials as a 'closed text' that limits the creativity and agency of readers and interpreters. Those who think of Islam as a body of closed texts also tend to have revivalist worldviews and to think in terms of what Mircea Eliade (1954) terms the myth of the eternal return. They see the texts as being a historically accurate representation of the life in the 'golden age' of Islam and as archetypes that contemporary Muslims are obligated to replicate. Their arguments rely heavily on *dalil* or 'proof texts' that are often quoted without reference to the scriptural and historical contexts within which they are located. For these people, to be a Muslim is to use specific textual precedents as models for individual and social life. Those who understand Islam as an 'open text' are more inclined to seek out what Fazlur Rahman (2009) called 'major themes' in the scriptural corpus and to use them as guides for constructing forward looking visions of personal and collective identity. To put things very simply, those who choose revivalist hermeneutics maintain that because the Prophet Muhammad had many wives, some of whom were quite young when he married them, 'proper' Muslims should do the same. Many of those who choose what may be termed 'thematic hermeneutics' maintain that because the guiding principle in the Prophet's domestic life was justice, this is the principle that should guide contemporary

Muslims. This leads many to conclude that in the modern world polygamy should be outlawed because it is inherently unjust.

The issue is further complicated by the fact that this is not a binary distinction. The 'open'- and 'closed'-text hermeneutical positions are rather the two terminal points on a continuum of interpretative strategies. There are a virtually infinite number of intermediary points. One of the consequences of this is that participants in these debates cannot be divided into neat, mutually exclusive camps. Shifting coalitions rather than fixed alliances are the natural features of this discourse. As is clear from the preceding discussion of Widayanto's religious views and behaviour, agreement on one contested issue does not necessarily imply a convergence of opinion on others of equal significance. Islamists find themselves in agreement with Widayanto on family law matters and at the same time could not disagree more strongly with his choice of devotional practices. Similarly, there are many who find his devotional practice to be normative who are repulsed by his personal and social behaviour.

The differences between the two basic modes of understanding Islam are fundamental, and not likely to change. Partisans of either position are not likely to be swayed by arguments rooted in the other. The question of which general understandings of Islam, and derivative questions such as those of the status of polygamy and child marriage in Muslim societies, will turn not so much on ascertaining 'God's Truth,' but again, as An-Na'im (2002) observes, on human agency and the political inclinations and will of the nation-states in which Muslim life is located. What is certain is that questions concerning polygamy and child marriage, and other family law issues, are unlikely to be definitively resolved, because they are significant elements of Qur'anic discourse and are also the subject of a substantial body of Hadith. On this, if little else, all parties to these debates can agree.

Among the most important and probably most frequently cited passages from the Qur'an concerning polygamy is:

> And if you fear that you cannot act equitably towards orphans, marry such women as seem good to you, two and three and four; but if you fear that you will not do justice between them, then marry only one.
>
> (4:3)

The Qur'an does not deal directly with the issue of child marriage, though it was a common practice in Muslim and most other societies prior to the advent of modernity. There are Hadith that refer to the Prophet Muhammad's marriage with Aisyah when she was still a young child. Among them is:

> Aisyah (Allah be pleased with her) reported that Allah's Apostle (may peace be upon him) married her when she was seven years old, and she was taken to his house as a bride when she was nine, and her dolls

> were with her; and when he (the Holy Prophet) died she was eighteen years old.
>
> (Sahih Muslim Book 8, Number 3311)

Both of these texts are authoritative and both have been subject to numerous and divergent interpretations. In the case of the Qur'anic passage authorizing polygamy, the critical concept is justice. The Hadith concerning Aisyah's marriage to the Prophet Muhammad is often cited in defence of child marriage. Muslims who oppose the practice also cite an extensive body of Hadith scholarship according to which Aisyah must have been 17 or 18 when her marriage with the Prophet was consummated (Engineer 1992: 110). Throughout the Muslim world proponents of and apologists for child marriage mention this Hadith as a proof text for their views, but generally do not mention the controversy surrounding it. Widayanto is among them. In 2009, he was quoted by the *Jakarta Globe* as stating:

> I'm not just doing what I like, it's based in religion. It's in accordance with the Prophet's teaching. You can marry a 7-year-old if you like but you can't have relations with her until she starts menstruating.
>
> (Jakarta Globe 2009)

The ambiguous nature of these texts is such that conflicting interpretations are nearly inevitable. This, together with differences concerning the appropriate exegetical strategies, makes the prospect for definitive solutions to problems concerning polygamy and child marriage exceedingly dim. It is likely that controversies such as that surrounding the marriage of Widayanto and Luftiana will continue for the foreseeable future and that nation-states will determine which interpretations are actualized in specific local contexts.

Polygamy and child marriage in Indonesia: historical and cultural backgrounds

Widayanto's behaviour is not a culturally or historically isolated or unique event; polygamy and child marriage figure significantly in Javanese history and culture. These are the local contexts within which the tale of Widayanto and Luftiana are located. During and before the colonial era, questions concerning marriage, divorce, inheritance and other family law issues were regulated by a combination of Islamic (*shari'ah*) and customary (*adat*) law. Polygamy was an accepted practice, though limited primarily to political and clerical elites (Jones 1997; Nurmila 2008). It was most common, and indeed nearly universal, in royal and aristocratic families. It was not uncommon for sultans and other royals to have large numbers of concubines (*selir*) in addition to the four wives allowed by Islamic law and to father fifty or more children. As late as the 1940s, local authorities were required to scour the Javanese countryside for attractive young girls who, in exchange for as little as

a few sacks of rice or small coins, were given as *selir* to elite men.[3] This practice was so common that some parents kept their daughters in virtual seclusion to avoid the roving eyes of local officials. Others actively sought out such unions in the hope of securing social, economic and religious rewards As late as the 1980s, the practice of polygamy by political elites did not evoke public criticism. The fact that Indonesia's first president Sukarno, and Yogyakarta Sultan and Vice President Hamengkubuwono IX, had four wives was widely known and attracted little public commentary.

Widayanto's marriage with Luftiana fits this pattern, though with a modern twist. With his first wife's knowledge and consent, he very publicly searched for a second. His reason was that his first wife was not willing to join him in the strenuous ascetic religious practices he believed to be responsible for his financial success. She was also not interested in playing an active role in his business and indicated that her main interests were memorizing and reciting the Qur'an. Widayanto wanted a wife who would join him in his religious devotions and become general manager of his company. It would appear that the Syech was searching not only for a wife with a *pesantren* self but also for the magical woman with whom marriage would ensure worldly wellbeing. He seems to have seen marriage with Luftiana as a way to establish himself as the dominant half of what is referred to as the power couple of Javanese culture.

Luftiana's parents were very poor prior to their daughter's marriage. They now have a large new house. Her father is reported to have commented that he had known that Luftiana would bring good fortune to the family since before she was born and that he expected that her marriage to a religious leader would bring the family good fortune in this world and the hereafter (Misterionline 2008a). His expectations were not unusual for Javanese parents who find themselves in his situation and indicate that his evaluation of his daughter's character was similar to Widayanto's.

Early marriage was common in Java only a few decades ago. Girls from all social strata were frequently married at, or even before the onset of puberty (Blackburn 2004; Jones and Gubhaju 2008). Islamic law and Javanese custom allow such unions but prohibit the consummation of marriage before the onset of menstruation. This practice is known as *nikah* or *kawin gantung*. It was, and is, especially common when the union is believed to be economically, religiously or politically advantageous for one or both families. The practice of early marriage is in no way unique to Java or to Islam. It is the norm in many pre-industrial, agrarian societies. Delayed marriage is one of the hallmarks of modernity. It is strongly associated with female, formal sector labour force participation and the associated need and desire for education. In Indonesia, both have been strongly associated with modernization since the early twentieth century.

In Java child marriage and polygamy were, and in some communities still are, justified or excused by religious concerns about fornication and adultery. It is often stated that early marriage discourages such behaviour among women, and polygamy and marriage with much younger women keeps men

away from these sins. These practices are also sometimes understood as ways of emulating the social practice of the Prophet Muhammad. For many Muslims the Prophet's behaviour is seen as a model for all aspects of personal, ritual and social behaviour. Living in accord with the Prophetic model is seen as the most certain way to obtain God's blessing in this world and the rewards of paradise in the next. For religiously observant Muslims these are very serious issues. It is for this reason that progressive Muslims have turned increasingly to the language of Islam and away from the secular language of human rights to combat Widayanto and his compatriots.

Fornication and adultery are very serious sins. They are also understood as sins that are difficult to resist because of the power of desire arising from *nafsu*. In Indonesian and other Muslim societies, social life is structured in ways that are thought to make them less likely. Early marriage is only one of a number of strategies designed to protect girls and young women from falling prey to this type of *nafsu*. In the early twentieth century many conservative religious leaders opposed female education, even at the level of basic literacy, because they feared that girls and young women would be drawn into temptation by love letters. It is likely that concerns voiced by some Islamist preachers about the propriety of Facebook and other social networking internet sites are motivated by similar concerns. There are other restrictions on female behaviour that were motivated by these same concerns. Prior to the 1930s girls and unmarried women living in the Yogyakarta *kauman* (neighbourhoods populated by *ulama* and other *santri* families found in older Indonesian cities) were not allowed to wear shoes, leave their homes after the evening prayer, or wear makeup to discourage romantic liaisons. Today the idea of young women going about barefoot would be absurd, but many conservative families and educational institutions continue to insist that young women remain home after dark (see Rahayu, this volume).

Early marriage is also a common theme in Indonesian literature and especially in the writings of Indonesia's most famous novelist Pramoedya Ananta Toer (1996, 2003). The early marriages of the two heroines frames the tale of the tension between tradition and modernity that is the overarching theme of *Bumi Manusia* (*This Earth of Mankind*) (1996), the first volume of his classic Buru Quartet. It is the primary theme of his subsequent *Gadis Pantai* (*The Girl from the Coast*) (2003); that is, the story of Pramoedya's maternal grandmother's early marriage. In both cases parents agree to give their young daughters to powerful men, a Dutch factory manager in *Bumi Manusia* and a Javanese Regent in *Gadis Pantai,* in hope of gaining economic advantage.

The promotion of educational opportunities for girls and delayed marriage were prominent themes in early Indonesian nationalism. Raden Adjeng Kartini (1879–1904) was a Javanese aristocrat and Indonesia's first feminist heroine. She is known for critiques of polygamy and early marriage and for advocacy of educational opportunities for girls and women (Taylor 1989). Kyai Ahmad Dahlan, the founder of the Muslim modernist organization Muhammadiyah, also advocated education for girls and young women as a

necessary component of his strategy for the modernization of both Islam and Indonesian society. Restricting or banning child marriages and polygamy and other family law issues have been core issues for secular and Muslim women's organizations throughout independent Indonesia's history (Blackburn 2004; Martyn 2005).

In Indonesia today opinion is divided about both early marriage and polygamy. The modern educated middle classes overwhelmingly oppose both. Among rural populations, religious and cultural conservatives, both are common and widely accepted. In many villages girls are typically married at, or below, the legal minimum age of 16. In some instances the girl's age is overstated on marriage registration documents. What is called *siri* or secret marriage is also common. In such cases a religiously valid marriage is not legally registered. The view that early marriage is both natural and desirable is widespread. Many Indonesian men feel that to marry a woman beyond her early twenties is not acceptable. It is often said that once they pass this age, women will become too interested in their careers and will not be good wives or mothers. These views remain common even among young men who are themselves highly educated. Marriage often crosses generational lines. It is not uncommon for men to be of approximately the same age as their wife/wives' parents.

Early and polygamous marriages are particularly acceptable when they bring financial, social and religious benefit to the bride's family. Poor parents are often willing to give young daughters to wealthy men, even as second, third or fourth wives, for financial gain and to acquire high-status sons-in-law. Giving a daughter to an esteemed religious figure such as a *kyai* is also thought to be a source of God's grace and blessing. Conversely, among the traditional religious elite it is common for parents to seek young daughters of especially esteemed figures as brides for their sons because these girls are believed to be sources of blessing as well as social status. Early and polygamous marriage is often thought to be desirable because it is in conformity with the *sunnah* (social and religious practice of the Prophet Muhammad, his family and companions).

Early and polygamous marriage also resonates with Javanese cultural assumptions concerning sexuality and spiritual power. These intersect with *shar'iah*-based concerns with gender segregation and prevention of sexual sin in complex ways. Gender segregation in either its traditional forms, or those described in chapters in this volume by Rohmaniyah and Rahayu, are strategies for containing sexuality by bringing it under the control of *shari'ah*. Early marriage is another.

Resurgent polygamy and democratic change

Public advocacy of polygamy and child marriage are more common today than was the case prior to the democratic transition of 1998. This is especially true about polygamy. Numerous books have been published on the subject and it is often the topic of television talk shows. Some politicians, especially

those from PKS, openly endorse it. To have more than one wife has become something of a status symbol for successful men concerned with presenting an Islamic image (Feillard 1999).This is largely the result of the easing of the hegemonic cultural policies of the New Order regime of Indonesia's second president, Suharto, who ruled the country with an iron hand for thirty-three years (1965–98). The New Order regime was culturally as well as politically authoritarian. While it championed Indonesia's cultural diversity, it simultaneously sought to define the limits of diversity and stifled dissenting voices. Unlike his predecessor Sukarno, and most historical Indonesian leaders, Suharto was a committed monogamist. He not only practised monogamy, he encouraged and tried to enforce it. The monogamist family in which a loyal, subservient wife established harmony and tranquillity was the New Order paradigm for both the family and the nation (Artha 2007; Woodward 2010). Polygamy was restricted, and prohibited for Indonesia's millions of civil servants. It could be practised quietly, but could not be openly discussed or advocated.

As Suzanne Brenner (2007) has noted, the era of free speech that accompanied the fall of the New Order and the democratic transition of 1998 removed these restrictions. Many topics, ranging from the idea of an Islamic State to the anti-communist politicide and blood bath that accompanied the founding of the New Order that could not be talked about for decades, are now openly and enthusiastically debated. Polygamy is no exception. Advocacy of polygamy has become an important part of the political and cultural agendas of Indonesia's resurgent Islamist movement. Islamist political parties, including PKS, and militant groups operating outside the electoral system, including *Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia* (MMI) (Indonesian Council of Jihad Fighters), support polygamy as a means of increasing the size of their organizations because polygamous marriages produce more children and hence more party cadres, or martyrs in the case of MMI (see Rohmaniyah, this volume). It is also supported by apolitical fundamentalist social movements widely referred to as Salafi that understand polygamy as an element of the genuinely Islamic way of life. For many people associated with these groups, living in a polygamous family is part of what it means to be Muslim.

Indonesian Islamists are concerned as much with cultural as they are with overtly political issues. The transformation of Indonesian cultures on the basis of what they understand to be Prophetic models is among the most prominent themes in Islamist discourse. Polygamy and, to a lesser degree, child marriage now figure significantly in public ideological as well as religious debates. They are not only discussed but also advocated as Islamic practice. In general, people with this orientation look to Islamic scripture for concrete behavioural models, not for more complex abstract conceptual models.

Many of the new polygamists are wealthy businessmen. Some claim that polygamy is good for women because they marry their boyfriends instead of engaging in adulterous relationships with them. Some polygamy advocates go so far as to claim that the practice is obligatory for men who can afford it, and who can treat multiple wives justly in accordance with the *shari'ah*

requirement requiring equal treatment. They rarely reflect on what justice in the context of a polygamous family might entail or how women, including their wives, might define it. It is not possible to support the position that polygamy is obligatory on the basis of Islamic law. The claim is an assertion rooted in ideological conviction and theological ignorance.

To denounce these practices, and especially to denounce them in the language of Islam, can be understood as a mode of counter-radical discourse. Muslim feminists and other opponents of polygamy argue that it is impossible to treat multiple wives and their children equally and that for this reason polygamy constitutes domestic violence. They consider child marriage to be child abuse, no matter what its status in traditional Islamic law may be. Many are convinced that the legal age for marriage is too low and that marriage at less than 21 years of age endangers the physical and emotional health of young women.

Widayanto's marriage to Luftiana is not the first polygamy case to become a media sensation. Puspo Wardoyo, a successful businessman who operates a chain of grilled chicken restaurants, began flaunting and promoting polygamy in 2000 (Van Wichelen 2009). He was awarded a polygamy prize in a competition sponsored by the Indonesian Polygamy Society (Masyarakat Poligami Indonesia), a group he founded. He was subsequently featured in numerous magazine and newspaper articles and appeared on popular television talk shows. Wardoyo attributes his business success to his adherence to polygamy and other Islamic practices. He has also stated that the fact that he has more than one religiously acceptable sexual partner enables him to avoid the sins of fornication and adultery. Feminist and other progressive Muslim groups were outraged by Wardoyo's statements and staged demonstrations in response. He is, however, generally considered to be something of a buffoon and not a serious political actor.

Polygamy and child marriage in Indonesian religious and political discourse

Polygamy and child marriage remain common and, for a small, but significant, segment of the population, are culturally and religiously acceptable in contemporary Indonesia. They are, however, generally located in local and private social and cultural space. Even when they are not concealed, they are rarely discussed or displayed publicly. Men do not generally advertise the fact that they are marrying a young girl. Rather they treat it as normal and unexceptionable social behaviour or alternatively seek to hide it, even, and perhaps especially, from their wives. It is likely that Widayanto could have privately married Luftiana and even the two other younger girls he planned to marry and not have attracted public, much less national, attention. This is an example of what Peter Berger (1967) and Thomas Luckmann (1967) have described as the privatization of religion. The practice of polygamy and child marriage has not vanished in modern Indonesia, but it has, until recently, rarely been the topic of public discourse.

Widayanto chose to make child and polygamous marriage part of his public persona and bid for celebrity, in effect deprivatizing them. In so doing he set the stage for a social drama and highly contested public discourse with much wider implications. By placing early marriage in the public square he added a new dimension to debates concerning relationships between normative and religious law and drew secular and religious authorities into a public discourse which appears to be moving in the direction of a zero-sum game. He could have chosen to locate his marriages in the ambiguous space of *siri* as religiously valid but legally unrecognized. He chose instead to provoke a public debate in which such ad hoc compromises are impossible. Widayanto's public performance made it impossible for many other Indonesian political and religious leaders to remain silent. It also pulled the issue of child marriage into the larger discourse concerning state–religion relations.

Today, advocacy of child marriage and polygamy is associated with other, more overtly political aspects of an increasingly radical Islamist agenda. It is perhaps for this reason that Indonesian Islamists, including PKS, came to Widayanto's defence, even though they utterly reject his more general religious orientation. According to a report on SciForums (2008), PKS leader Hilman Rosyad Syihab described Widayanto's marriage to Luftiana as being not only religiously valid, but also normal practice. He also stated that the Indonesian law establishing 16 as the legal age of marriage for young women was only a suggestion and that it is not obligatory. PKS stood nearly alone in its defence of Widayanto. Not surprisingly, Puspo Wardoyo, who now heads *Masyarakat Poligami Indonesia* (Indonesian Polygamy Society) also pledged to support Widayanto (Misterionline 2008b).

Umar Shihab, of the normally conservative *Majelis Ulama Indonesia* (Indonesian Council of Islamic Scholars, MUI), condemned Widayanto and expressed his personal sympathy for Luftiana. As reported in Jakarta Globe (2009), he said: 'Men should marry adults; there are a lot of other prospective brides around. Why has he married a 12 year old? The poor girl.'

A very significant MUI *fatwa* (non-legally binding opinions based on Islamic legal norms) stated that marriages under the ages specified by Indonesian civil law are prohibited (Platzdasch 2009). According to a report in Detiknews (2009), MUI stated that, as long as Widayanto had not had sexual relations with Luftiana prior to the time she began menstruating, he had not sinned, but that Indonesian law must be enforced. Prosecutors filed charges of violating the Marriage Act of 1974, exploiting a child and illegally employing a child. This is a concerted effort not only to bring a suspected paedophile and child abuser to justice, but also to reassert the supremacy of civil law and the sovereignty of the Indonesian state.

Widayanto was jailed in connection with child abuse charges in March 2009. He was held for thirteen days, and released subject to the proviso that he report regularly to police headquarters. He was arrested again in July for failing to comply with the conditions of his release. The outcome of the case remained uncertain for months, in part because Luftiana refused to cooperate

with police investigations. Widayanto's lawyer explained to Jakarta Globe (2009):

> Ulfa has menstruated, which means she's an adult who can think for herself. She has never filed a complaint to the police. She is happy with her husband, but now her husband has been arrested. So tell me, who's the victim here?

It is also the case that victims of sexual abuse are often unwilling or unable to name their abusers, much less file police reports, until they are certain of their safety.

A group of *ulama* (Muslim scholars) associated with the *pesantren* tradition of Nadhlatul Ulama have lent their support to efforts to deny Widayanto the religious legitimacy he claims. In particular, they questioned his right to use the Islamic title 'Syech'. They expressed concern that he used the title despite having never studied in a *pesantren* or addressed a religious gathering. Kyai Hajji Suyono explained that, while it is not a matter of law, the title 'Syech' is customarily reserved for people with deep understanding of Islam and exemplary behaviour. He also expressed concern about Widayanto's arrogance and fear that his behaviour and use of the title 'Syech' would tarnish the image of Islam. He very pointedly referred to Widayanto as *saudara* (brother) and not *Bapak* (father), which would normally be appropriate for a man of his age. This was a very powerful symbolic rebuke. The *ulama* also stated very clearly that, despite the fact the 'brother' Puji's marriage to Luftiana is legal in *shari'ah* terms that he should be prosecuted for violating Indonesian civil and criminal statutes. They promised to cooperate fully with the police investigation (Nahdlatul Ulama 2009). Coming from representatives of the *pesantren* community and tradition in which Widayanto has used to establish his Islamic credentials, a more devastating critique is hard to imagine.

Conclusion

The case of Widayanto and Luftiana is different from other high-profile polygamy cases, for two reasons. The first is that it involves child marriage. The second is that, because it has become embroiled in the legal system it has led to a direct confrontation between political forces with entirely different views of the relationship between civil and religious views of family law. One group advocates the rule of positive law; the other, the rule of religious law. This has led to an unlikely alliance between traditional conservative Muslims, including Widayanto, and Islamists, including PKS. Widayanto and Luftiana are now at the centre of a controversy of much greater significance than their own tawdry tale, the resolution of which may prove to be difficult, and which has significant implications for the future of Islam–State relations in Indonesia. This is a zero-sum political, legal and religious game in which compromise on basic issues seems impossible. The game is not just about Widayanto's guilt or

innocence. It is also about Muslim identity and how Islamic teachings should be put into practice in *pesantren* and the wider society. That may be why the legal cases against Widayanto drag on at a snail's pace. On 24 November 2010, he was sentenced to four years in prison for child sexual abuse.

Ultimately the rule of normative law triumphed. This does not, however, resolve the underlying legal, religious and cultural questions. Nevertheless, comparative demographic studies indicate that time is on the side of the progressives and that, as the course of modernization continues, so will the demographic transition. As the practice of child marriage declines and collective memory of it grows dimmer tales like that of Widayanto and Luftiana will seem even more outrageous than they do today. If delayed marriage is the social norm, religious arguments in favour of child marriage will fall on increasingly deaf ears. In Peter Berger's (1967) terms, it would seem that at least as far as these issues are concerned, progressive Islam is the emerging sacred canopy for Indonesia in the twenty-first century.

Notes

1 Partai Amanat Nasional (PAN) is a nominally secular party whose base of support is almost entirely drawn from the modernist Muslim organization Muhammadiyah.
2 Most *pesantren* do not charge fixed tuition. Fees are usually are made on a sliding scale determined by the student's financial status. Typically, room and board cost approximately 200,000 Indonesian Rupiah (£13/US$20) per month, per student.
3 *Selir* were legally the property, not wives, of their husbands. The number of *selir* nobles could have was limited only by their ability to provide for them.

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9 Constructing sexuality in a panopticon *pesantren*

Mustaghfiroh Rahayu

The traditional image of the *pesantren* (a traditional Islamic boarding school for the study of the Qur'an, Hadith and other classical Islamic texts) is that of a gender-segregated Islamic educational institution in which all aspects of life, including sexuality, are governed by *shari'ah*-based regulations. Because governing and limiting the expression of sexuality is an important aspect of *shari'ah*, it is also a basic element of *pesantren* culture. There has almost certainly always been tension between these ideals and the actual discourse about and practice of sexuality among *pesantren* students. This chapter concerns the discourse and practice of sexuality in a new type of *pesantren* that has developed in Yogyakarta and other Indonesian university communities in recent years. In these communities, some *pesantren* are no longer autonomous Islamic educational institutions but, rather, function primarily as secure dormitories and modern regulators of sexuality.

As Indonesian society modernizes and negotiates with the influx of competing discourses on sexuality, Indonesian youth are faced with new opportunities for sexual practice with new sets of meanings. These social changes in youth culture have influenced Indonesian Muslim parents' preference for *pesantren* as living places for their children when they leave home to study. These preferences are especially pronounced among parents of female students. Living arrangements in *pesantren* regulate and enforce Qur'anic teachings in order to protect female students from premarital sexual activity. A report based on research in Yogyakarta in 2003 horrified Indonesian parents by revealing that 97 per cent of female students at one private university were no longer virgins. The absence of supervision in dormitories and a lack of social control were reasons cited for the students' sexual activity (Wijayanto 2004). Although the validity of this research was debated, it sounded a warning bell for parents.

This chapter analyzes the dynamic negotiations between *santri* (a pious Muslim student who studies or lives in a *pesantren*), *nyai* (a wife or daughter of a *kyai* – a male Muslim leader) and teachers in the construction of discourses on sexuality in a *pesantren* for female university students. It addresses questions concerning the nature of sexual discourse in *pesantren*, how *pesantren* discourse and gendered structures affect sexuality and how students negotiate with these discourses through practice. The discussion focuses

primarily on a *pesantren* complex I will refer to as Gedung Santriwati, a residential facility for Muslim female students in Yogyakarta.[1]

Pesantren: a subculture?

Pesantren education is socially and physically located within a boarding house complex with the house of the *kyai* at the centre. This spatial arrangement means that interaction between students and the teacher persists twenty-four hours a day, leading to the construction of strong social bonds between them (Dhofier 1990: 8). These residential schools are dedicated to the transmission of classical Islamic texts, including study of the Qur'an and Hadith (traditions concerning the words and acts of the Prophet Muhammad), legal texts (*fiqh*), mysticism (*tasawwuf*) and Arabic grammar (*alat*). The defining characteristics of a *pesantren* include the mosque, the *santri*, the *kyai* and the teaching of classical texts. A typical *pesantren* complex consists of a mosque, study rooms (which in early times were located in the *kyai*'s residence, but today are usually in a separate classroom complex), dormitories and the *kyai*'s house (Hefner and Zaman 2007).

Pesantren life has distinctive social norms, which are very different from those of the wider society. Some attitudes, including those about sexuality that are tolerated in society, are generally unacceptable in the *pesantren*. The *pesantren* world is a distinct subculture, but is one that is nonetheless linked to society in general. Abdurrahman Wahid (2001: 2) describes six basic features of *pesantren*–society relations. First, *pesantren* lifestyles are defined as being different from the common pattern of social life. Second, *pesantren* are financially and socially supported by the larger society. Third, character-building and the acquisition of knowledge are the twin pillars of *pesantren* education. Fourth, the distinction between *pesantren* life and normal life is marked by clearly visible symbols. Fifth, the popular perception, among the *santri* population, is that *pesantren* life is a social and religious ideal. Sixth, there are attempts to use *pesantren* values as the foundation for the establishment of a new, universal value system in the wider society.

Although the identification of the *pesantren* as a subculture is debatable, the reality that *pesantren* has it own distinct norms is undeniable. *Pesantren* are known as traditional institutions of Islamic education for understanding, comprehending and practising Islamic teaching (*tafqquh fiddin*) and stressing Islamic morality as a guide for daily life. Because of the weight of religious values within the *pesantren* curriculum, most Indonesian parents feel secure sending their children to them. *Pesantren* education is seen as a guarantee that their children's future lives are safe, especially now, when modernization and globalization are perceived to contribute to moral decay. The promise of enhanced religious knowledge and personal security for children leads parents to send their children to *pesantren*. Parental expectations are heightened when the children are female and approaching college age. Traditionally, parents sent their children to *pesantren* for junior and senior high school, but it is

becoming more common for parents to send their children to *pesantren* while they are studying in university. Again, in addition to the benefits of enhanced religious knowledge, parents think that *pesantren* are morally secure places.

Gedung Santriwati's founding was somewhat accidental. In 1991, three students from Medan, East Sumatra, graduated from senior high school in Yogyakarta. They were accepted at universities in Yogyakarta and needed a place to live. They approached their Qur'anic teacher, Nyai Widyasari, and she opened her door to them and they became the first *santri* of what was to become a *pesantren* for university students. Soon, she started building rooms and other facilities for the new *pesantren*, stressing the need for a special *pesantren* for university students. In an interview she explained, 'There should be a *pesantren* which is specifically for university students in this area. At this [college] age students are so vulnerable, and they need special treatment that differs from the senior or junior high school level.'[2] Since then, Nyai Widyasari and her husband have operated their own *pesantren*. Because the students of this *pesantren* are all female, with the agreement of her family, Nyai Widyasari was given the responsibility of heading this *pesantren*.

Only select students can study and live in this *pesantren*. Nyai Widyasari screens most students who apply to enter her *pesantren*, but she does not screen *santri* who graduate from *pesantren* schools known to have strong moral training. She stresses that morality is the basic criterion in accepting a student. The new students and their parents are obliged to meet with Nyai Widyasari, at which time parents formally hand the responsibility of their children over to her as the head of the *pesantren*.

When I conducted research in the *pesantren* in 2005, there were sixty-two *santri* living in the fifteen rooms of Gedung Santriwati. Most of the students were enrolled at Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University in Yogyakarta. The others were students at secular universities in the city. The *santri* at this *pesantren* came from middle and upper class families. Thirty-seven possessed motorcycles, fifty-five had cell phones, thirty-six had both and only six possessed neither. Gedung Santriwati's neighbours could easily identify the *santri* because of their relatively stylish and expensive clothes. The way these students spent their leisure time was also different from *santri* in other *pesantren*. Many of them spent their weekends in shopping malls, hotel swimming pools near the *pesantren*, tourist areas and spas. These activities marked the class differences between these more wealthy *santri* and those of *santri* from ordinary *pesantren* in the area who could not afford such luxuries.

Pesantren activities: a form of discipline

No matter where they spend their day, *santri* are obliged to be at the *pesantren* by *magrib* (the sunset prayer at around 6.00 p.m.). *Santri* begin their *pesantren* lives at this time of the day. Nyai Widyasari usually leads the prayer and continues with *wirid* (recitation of selected Qur'anic/Arabic texts). She then leaves the prayer hall and is replaced by another teacher, who teaches Islamic

texts until *isya*' (evening prayer time at around 7.00 p.m.). After *isya*' comes the most important part of the *santri* schedule: reading the Qur'an in front of Nyai Widyasari, one by one. *Santri* always try their best to come to this session. They can be absent from *magrib* prayers and study, but they try hard not to miss this class. It is at the end of these *pesantren* activities that *santri* can continue their personal activities in the *pesantren* building. Their *pesantren* life starts again in the early morning, at around 4.30 a.m., by performing *subuh* (the morning prayer) and reciting one special chapter of the Qur'an, *Yasin*, together. They maintain this schedule every day, except for Saturday and Sunday mornings, when they have classes after the morning prayer.

The *santri* study five books. One of them is a book about prayer that includes instructions for praying in specific life situations; two books discuss mysticism; one book relates to women's behaviour; and another focuses on Qur'anic exegesis.[3] All of the teachers are men. Thus, one of the *pesantren* regulations is that *santri* in-class behaviour must be modest. Modesty in this *pesantren* means covering the hair properly and wearing a skirt or sarong. Most female *santri* choose to wear a *mukena* (prayer robe) over their regular attire. Indonesian and other Malay Muslim women wear this robe for praying, even when praying alone. There are two types of *mukena* – a one-piece variety and a two-piece variant that includes a top and bottom. In either case, the robe should be very loose, to cover the whole body except face and palms. White is the traditional colour, although now there are many other choices of colour and pattern, as *mukena* have entered the realm of Muslim fashion. The *mukena* establishes an envelope of purity and holiness around the female body and is sometimes said to have protective powers.

The requirement to dress modestly while attending class is not the only form of sexual discourse in the *pesantren*. There are multiple lists of regulations, which are considered as 'sexuality' regulations. One is a list of regulations regarding *santri* relations with males; included are the prohibition on leaving the *pesantren* building after the sunset prayer, regulations for meeting male guests, prohibition of visiting male boarding houses in the neighbourhood of the *pesantren* and a prohibition on riding with a male on a motorcycle. Another list of regulations concerns proper clothing both outside and inside the *pesantren*. *Santri* are not allowed to wear tight blouses, shirts and trousers. Blouses must be long enough to cover the bottom, the headscarf must cover the bosom and whatever they choose to wear must cover their arms completely. Inside the *pesantren* they must wear a skirt or sarong that covers their ankles, and they are prohibited from wearing transparent skirts. Among those regulations, the stiffest punishments are applied to *santri* who break the regulations regarding relationships with males. *Santri* who break the rules on modesty are called before the *santri* body, and those who break rules related to male relationships are called before Nyai Widyasari directly.

Friday is usually a holiday for Islamic institutions, including in this *pesantren*. To welcome it, there are no classes on Thursday night, which is

considered a joyful night because they perform singing/chanting of *shalawat* (poems to praise God and the Prophet Muhammad) as well as hold their weekly meeting. It is also a time for *santri* who break the rules to receive punishment from the student body or, in the case of more serious infractions, from Nyai Widyasari.

Heteronormativity rules

From the way this *pesantren* highlights relationships with males as a serious threat to *santri* morality, it is clear that it fully supports heteronormativity. The aim of the regulations on sexuality is to prevent male–female relationships that could lead to sexual activities including same-sex sexual relationships. *Santri* commented that the regulations of the *pesantren* actually provide them with an easy way to go out and meet anyone they want during the day, which eliminates any interest in same-sex sexual activities in the *pesantren*. In contrast, in many *pesantren* that prohibit their *santri* from having contact with the opposite sex, same-sex sexual relationships of various forms are common. Heteronormativity is also prevalent in aspects of *santri* daily life in relation to sexuality. Their relations with the opposite sex become the main topic of discussion when it comes to sexuality issues. Much of their chit-chat, the way they treat their bodies and their ideas about beauty and dating reflect focus on relationships with males. They stated that same-sex sexual relationships have no appeal.

Sexuality is a challenging topic for *santri*. It is challenging in part because it is one of the reasons they live in the *pesantren*; to guard against the moral decadence that is the result of sexual acts. Another reason is because a strong taboo surrounds this topic. There are many factors that contribute to discourses on sexuality. These include religious teachings, family backgrounds, the power of *pesantren* through its regulations, the media they read/watch, peer-group pressure and the very architecture of the *pesantren.*

Among these, the last three strongly influence *santri* sexual discourse most strongly. *Santri* obtain a great deal of information about sexuality from television. One *santri* admitted that she learned how to kiss from watching soap-opera dramas. When watching, she commented, 'They can do that because "their world" is different from ours.' What she means by 'their world' is the worldview which constructs ideas about what is considered permissible and prohibited. Interestingly, most of the *santri* I interviewed confessed that they have watched 'blue films' (pornographic movies) with their university colleagues in their boarding houses (not in the *pesantren*). They describe such films as 'movies from the period of ignorance', a reference to Arab social practice at the time of the Prophet Muhammad. However, almost all of them asserted that they had not finished watching any of these films because they felt uncomfortable, even disgusted, with what the actors were doing.

Peer groups contribute to young people's constructions of sexuality. Because these students live away from their families, friends are inevitably the

first people they talk with about any matter, including sexuality. They often, for example, approach a student studying nursing when they encounter problems related to sexual and reproductive health. Their relationships with university colleagues also shape their sexuality. The university campus, which does not segregate male and female students, gives them the freedom to have contact with their male counterparts. *Santri* who are active in social clubs and other student organizations have even more opportunities to have relationships with males.

The architecture of the *pesantren* also contributes to the sexual discourse. The location of *santri* rooms at the back of the complex does not allow them to get in/out of the complex without passing Nyai Widyasari's house. Moreover, the only gateway is located precisely beside Nyai Widyasari's room, which incorporates a huge pane of one-way glass through which the people inside the room can see outside, but outsiders cannot see in. This 'panopticon' like space arrangement, arguably, enables Nyai to monitor what clothes the *santri* wear, the way they wear their veils, with whom they go and so forth. Whether the Nyai actually monitors them is questionable; however, all the *santri* believe that Nyai always sees whatever they do from her room.

The most common sexual practice in this *pesantren* is dating boyfriends. Boyfriends are an open topic of conversation. Everybody knows who is whose boyfriend. It is commonly understood that whenever a *santri* starts returning late to the *pesantren*, it means that she has a boyfriend. The time restrictions under which they live encourage them to attempt to spend much of the day with their boyfriends. However, they insist that their way of dating is 'Islamic' dating, which does not involve any physical contact. The common activity on a date is extended conversation with one's boyfriend after class and having lunch together. Some of the *santri* do not even allow their boyfriends to shake their hands, much less hold hands.

Which/whose powers are exercised here?

To identify who has what kind and how much power, what is considered to be power and what the sources of power are, is not easy in a *pesantren*. It would be simple to say that in this *pesantren* the Nyai possesses the power, but as a matter of fact, regulations, which are agreed to by *santri* in a democratic process, also have power. On the other hand, when we are tempted to think that power is embodied in regulations, we must be reminded of the fact that ultimately, decisions regarding regulations are in the hands of the Nyai. Power in this *pesantren* is omnipresent; it permeates *santri* daily life. Applying Foucault's (1980) understanding of the concept of power to *pesantren* life we can conclude that power in the *pesantren* is not centred in a place or position but it exists everywhere. In this *pesantren*, power operates locally; it circulates in the capillaries of the social body, and emanates from every point in the social field. It tries to control its targets effectively through discipline, training, surveillance and documentation, hence its panopticon features (Foucault 1995).

Discipline is one mechanism for the operation of power (Foucault 1980). The relationship between knowledge and power creates discipline. It might be said that disciplines are techniques for assuring the ordering of human multiplicities. The heterogeneity of the members of this *pesantren* is subjected to the mechanisms of discipline. Discipline in Gedung Santriwati is expressed through the distribution of space and the timetable which the students live by.

The distribution of rooms in a *pesantren* gives individual *santri* no private space. Everyone easily accesses all the space, with the single exception of the shower room, which they are allowed to use for short periods only, because other *santri* always need it, too. This more or less effectively prevents *santri* from practising, or even coming to desire to practise, masturbation or same-sex relationships. The fact that their dormitory rooms are closed only when they go to bed limits the *santri* from doing anything that violates established convention. Due to the location of rooms, precise documentation of the number of *santri* assigned to each of them and the rigid timetable, the apparatus of power can monitor the presence and absence of *santri* easily.

In his explication of disciplinary mechanisms, Foucault uses the term *l'examen* (the examination). The examination has the features of a ceremony of power and the form of an experiment. It involves the deployment of force and the establishment of truth. *L'examen* occurs at *santri* weekly meetings. At this time, *santri* who have broken any rules are judged and punished. The harshest punishment for a 'rule breaker' is to be evicted from the *pesantren*. It is applied when a *santri* breaks a rule related to having a relationship with a male, such as spending time in a male's room on more than one occasion. Less serious violations of rules lead to punishments including cleaning the shower rooms, toilets and kitchen and helping prepare meals.

In this examination, power is used to classify *santri* as either obedient or rebellious. The examination is in Foucault's (1995: 192) terms, 'at the centre of the procedures that constitute the individual as an effect of power, as both effect and object of knowledge'. However, different from Foucault's use of *l'examen*, which classifies people in hierarchical strata, the examination in Gedung Santriwati is not intended to create hierarchy.

The *santri* claim that examinations do not affect them much because they are another part of the weekly routine. At first, they felt embarrassed when they were punished, but after a time it became a simple matter of whether or not they were following regulations. For one of the *santri*, Dahlia, however, enduring the examination is the consequence of her decision to live in Gedung Santriwati. Dahlia is a student at Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University in Yogyakarta. She is very active in student organizations and became a prominent female leader in activist circles. To support her activities on campus, she rents a room in a dormitory near the campus. When the activities require her to stay late at night on campus, instead of returning to the *pesantren* she stays at her rented room. As a consequence she is regularly punished by other *santri* in Gedung Santriwati. Being punished for absence from *pesantren* classes is simply one of the consequences of being a university

activist. *Pesantren* punishment is part of her weekly menu and it is no big deal for her. She is accepted as a part of *pesantren* social life despite the punishment she regularly receives.

The examination in Gedung Santriwati serves as a mechanism of power and demonstrates the reality, presence and location of power. It is not so much aimed at giving a lesson to *santri* on what is bad or good, as it is simply a part of the weekly routine. The examination reinforces the distribution of power, and serves as a reminder about the locus of power in the *pesantren* as a way of supporting a complex social function. For *santri* who do not break the rules, the examination is commonly understood as a technique to warn rule-breakers about their attitudes. Whether that warning affects them or not is beyond control of the rule-abiding. All Muslims are obliged to remind and admonish those who violate Islamic norms. So, the *pesantren*'s set of rules is seen as an extension of Muslim sisterhood (*ukhuwah Islamiyah*).

Power and resistance: *nyai* and *santri* in negotiation

Power is not power if there is no resistance (Foucault 1980: 386). The resistance process takes place in a dynamic set of relations among all participants. As a result, power relations are embedded strategic situations. Resistance can be possible, necessary or improbable. Resistance can be spontaneous, savage, solitary, concerted, rampant, violent, quick to compromise, self-interested or sacrificial. These points of resistance are present everywhere in power networks, including those of *pesantren* (Suyono 2002: 482–83).

No matter how hard the representatives of the student body and Nyai Widyasari try to keep *santri* in their 'true discourse' about sexuality, *santri* are bio-psychosocial. Their sexual activities are responses to hormonal balances, nervous systems, emotional needs as well as to Islamic moral values they have been taught. *Pesantren* assume that they have provided students with a true discourse on sexuality, but *santri* always have their own definition of true discourse.

The regulation requiring *santri* to return to the *pesantren* before *magrib*, for example, is not important for some students. They think it is acceptable not to attend *magrib* prayers as well as the classes that follow, so long as they attend the *isya*' prayer and recite the Qur'an for Nyai Widyasari. In this case, *santri* try to resist powers of regulation (enforced by the student body representatives) and yet obey the higher power of the leader of the *pesantren* because it is easier to negotiate with the student organization than with Nyai Widyasari.

Power is not always repressive; it can sometimes be negotiated. Confession is another strategy for maintaining power. As part of her method of teaching the Qur'an in the evening the students have to come before Nyai Widyasari one by one, in an application of *l'examen*. This method enables her to identify *santri* who come back to the *pesantren* on time or late.

Through the presence and absence of *santri*, Nyai Widyasari determines the true and false discourse related to sexuality in the *pesantren*. A *santri*'s

presence at night is an indicator that she maintains her morality, whereas absence suggests immorality. Thus, presence is not merely related to the question of attendance, but it is related to the way power differentiates true from false discourse. Wati told me during a discussion about the many live music concerts held in Yogyakarta that, 'Fortunately, I live in a *pesantren*, so I have a reason not to go to those concerts.' In her opinion, if she went to music concerts, she would go there with her boyfriend, which she could not even think about doing, because, for her, going out with her boyfriend at night would be a huge sin.

With regard to this basic assumption we can see that the confession supports heteronormative ideologies and the preservation of virginity. Nyai Widyasari stated that preventing *santri* from having heterosexual relationships is more important than preventing same-sex sexual relationships. In other words, with this confession 'ritual' she defines the true discourse on sexuality as a heterosexual one (Foucault 1980: 123).

The confession that is held at the Qur'an reading class is also a witness to a *santri's* menstruation cycle because traditional Islamic law prohibits a menstruating woman from reading or even touching the Qur'an. Menstruation which is a private bodily function thus becomes a public matter, because a woman who is menstruating is prohibited from joining this class and is therefore a non-verbal confession. The menstrual taboo, which is itself a social construction,[4] is strengthened through this confession. This confession provides *santri* with the alternative concept that menstruation is not strictly a private matter, but that it could also be a public matter in specific situations. The positive effect of this is that *santri* can talk about menstruation more openly. Some *santri* admitted that gradually they were able to talk about menstruation more openly with their male friends after seeing a friend talk about it in the *pesantren*.

Another way for *santri* to negotiate with *pesantren* regulations is by renting a room in a boarding house outside the *pesantren*. In the boarding house, they can meet their male friends at any time during the day. In these spaces prohibitions related to relationships with males do not apply or at least they are a matter of personal choice.

In addition to the regulations, power relations in Gedung Santriwati can also be interpreted through the design of its architecture. The space arrangement in this *pesantren* is an example of Foucault's panopticism. The location of Nyai Widyasari's room, with its one-way glass, is a mechanism for Nyai Widyasari to control *santri* activities. This architecture convinces *santri* that they are under surveillance, even when they are not, thereby inducing them to monitor themselves constantly.

The panoptic mechanism is further extended in Gedung Santriwati practice. Nyai Widyasari has a group of senior *santri* who help her to monitor younger *santri* behaviour outside the *pesantren*. This group usually consists of *santri* who have learned the Qur'an by heart and have, in Nyai Widyasari's judgement, an excellent record of morality. When members of this group witness

another *santri* violate the *pesantren*'s 'true discourse' on sexuality, they are required to report it to Nyai Widyasari directly.[5] When *santri* break a regulation on sexual relationships, they have to stand before the *santri* body. From this treatment, we can see that the violation of the norms of sexuality is regarded as more threatening to overall morality than the other transgressions. Responses to cases involving the violation of norms of sexuality indicate that the power relations in this *pesantren* are deployed to control *santri*'s sexuality, including behaviour that outsiders consider to be personal issues.

Constructing meanings

The relationship between power and knowledge in *pesantren* makes *santri* realize the nature of their existence and relationships with the world. The combination of knowledge and power on which *pesantren* life is predicated enables them to create meaning and construct personal realities. The types of knowledge found in *pesantren* are resources that can be used for the development of reflexivity and understanding of their own behaviour as well as providing models for personal behaviour, including sexual behaviour. Power relations inherent in *pesantren* life provide external control mechanisms. According to Peter Berger (1967), the provision of meaning is particularly important for an understanding of religion because of the ways in which meaning links the individual with the larger social group. Meaning is not inherent in a situation but is bestowed in the context of power relations.

As Berger (1967: 20–33) points out, the meaning system is both explanatory and normative, that is, it explains why things are and prescribes how they should be. This is a dialectic process of externalization, objectification and internalization. Through externalization, *santri* try to understand their lives, inside and outside of *pesantren*. Externalization is the process *santri* activate to understand and respond to the complexity of power and knowledge relations in their lives. By comprehending actual life experience, *santri* create material and cultural objects and internalize them in the context social life.

Regulation is the example of *santri*'s material object product. It is a result of *santri* apprehension of power and knowledge relationships in their daily lives. In another sense, *santri* also create cultural objects as a response to material objects. They create special languages and symbols for their own consumption. The statement about pornographic films from 'the period of ignorance' establishes a symbolic link between moral impropriety in contemporary Yogyakarta and pre-Islamic Arabia. This is an example of the construction of a private linguistic/cultural product that, in this case, refers to pornographic movies. *Santri* are not comfortable with the terms 'blue' or 'porn' and construct alternatives based on *pesantren* discursive conventions. However, their encounters with the world outside *pesantren* spark their curiosity. Thus, 'the movie from the period of ignorance' is a product of their 'shy' society.

As soon as one speaks of externalized products, however, one implies that *santri* attain a degree of distinctiveness against their producer. Regulation as a

product of *santri*'s externalization of their reality becomes a strange product for them. Regulation is, apparently, something 'out there'. As a result, *santri* sometimes resist regulation when they are unable to comprehend the realities it refers to. Resistance is the *santri* objectification of their reality.

The process of externalization and objectification lead *santri* to form new understandings of their realities. In this phase, *santri* come to internalize their reality by acknowledging that 'here (in the *pesantren*) is the right place'. Gedung Santriwati, with its complete facilities and regulations, is a better place for them than any other. Gedung Santriwati is a place in between other *pesantren* that have tight regulations and the boarding houses that have no regulations to preserve morality. Bunga, who has lived in the *pesantren* for three years, sums up women's *pesantren* experience well:

> I enjoy living here; it is the right choice for me. I know the environment of other *pesantren* in the area, and I think Gedung Santriwati is the best place for me. The rule about returning to the *pesantren* before *magrib* prayers prevents me from doing bad things that I might otherwise do. At least, it is a mechanism to control my relationship with my boyfriend. The free time in the day is enough for me. At night it is a place to study religious teachings.

Conclusion

Sexuality in Gedung Santriwati is not repressed, but rather it is controlled through a discursive truth regime. The *pesantren*'s truth regime on the subject of sexuality is congruent with *shari'ah*-based Islamic teachings. The main goal in controlling this discourse is protecting the *santri* from immorality as the panoptic design of the *pesantren* demonstrates. We may conclude that, in this *pesantren*, discourse on sexuality is predicated on the assumption that sexual activity, whatever form it may take, is not appropriate for *santri* of university age. This combination of discourse, discipline and practice is congruent with those intended to cultivate moral behaviour. Both play important roles in guiding the construction of *pesantren* selves and the constitution of the *pesantren* as a moral community.

Notes

1 Pseudonyms for places and persons are used throughout this chapter because of the sensitive nature of some of the topics considered.
2 Interview with Nyai Widyasari at Gedung Santriwati Hall during my fieldwork in 2005.
3 The Gedung Santriwati complex applies a democratic way of selecting books for *santri* to study. Most of time, the student committee proposes books, which are then subject to approval by Nyai Widyasari and other teachers. Examples of such books include *al adzkar al Muntakhabah min kalami Sayyidul Abrar sallalahu alaihi wa alihi wasallam* by Muhyiddin Abi Zakariya Yahya bin Sarif Nawawi; *Mukasyafatul Qulub* by al-Ghazali; *Mukhtasyar Ihya' 'Ulumuddin* by Imam

al-Ghazali; *Fatawa Mu'asyirah li al-Mar'ati al-Muslimah fi ad-Din wa al-Hayat* by Ibrahim Muhammad al-Jamil; and *Shifatu Tafasir: Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Kariim Jami'il Ma'tsur wa al Ma'qul* by Muhammad Ali ash Shobuni.

4 Religious teachings prohibit menstruating women from touching the Qur'an. Although this belief is based on debatable interpretations of the Qur'an, *pesantren* have made a 'true' discourse about it and there is no space for other interpretations.

5 Included in this violation of sexuality is the example of a *santri* who received a computer as a gift from her parents. Rules in the *pesantren* prohibit *santri* from possessing computers. When Nyai Widyasari found out from a senior *santri* that the computer was stored in the girl's boyfriend's boarding house, which caused to her visit him more often, the *santri* was asked to choose between living in the *pesantren* without meeting her boyfriend and moving out. Nyai Widyasari told me that there had been other cases like this.

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Glossary

Indonesian (In.), Acehnese (Aceh.) and Arabic (Ar.) words are indicated with italics in the glossary and throughout the text. The glossary includes foreign terms that appear routinely, while other terms have been translated in the text.

Adab Works on manners and comportment

Adat Customary laws and practices

Aliran kepercayaan/kebatinan Mystical groups (also known as 'belief movements')

Balee beuet (Aceh.) A place for religious instruction

Dayah (Aceh.) Acehnese Muslim school (similar to *pesantren* and/or *madrasah*)

Dhikr Remembrance of God

Feminisme Feminism

Fatwa Non-legally binding opinions based on Islamic legal norms

Fiqh Legal texts

Gus A title given to the son of a *kyai* in *pesantren* and *tarekat* institutions

Hadith Traditions concerning the words and acts of the Prophet Muhammad

Ilmu Knowledge; also refers to esoteric knowledge and 'spiritual power'

Ijazah Authorization/certification

Inong (Aceh.) Woman or wife

Khalifa A title for one who holds the highest authoritative position in Islam, including in Sufi orders

Kitab kuning Classical Islamic texts (literally, 'yellow books')

Kitab Jawi Malay language texts written in Arabic script

Kyai Male Muslim leader (of a *pesantren* or *madrasah)*

Madrasah An Islamic school that combines religious and secular curricula

Magrib Prayer time at dusk

Mazhab School(s) of Islamic law

***Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia* (*MMI*)** The Indonesian Council of Jihad Fighters

Majelis Taklim Religious study group

Muhammadiyah Indonesia's second largest Islamic organization, founded in 1912

Mukena Muslim prayer robe for women

Murshid A title given to a male leader, usually in *tarekat*

Murshida A title given to a female leader, usually in *tarekat*

Mushawarah Discussion

Musholla Prayer room

***Nahdlatul Ulama* (*NU*)** Indonesia's largest Islamic organization, founded in 1926

***Nahdlatul Wathan* (*NW*)** Lombok's largest local Islamic organization, founded in 1953

Ning A title sometimes given to daughters of *kyai* in Javanese *pesantren* (literally, 'young woman')

Nyai A title given to wives and daughters of *kyai*; and to Muslim women specialists

Pengajian Religious instruction

Pesantren A traditional Islamic boarding school for the study of the Qur'an, Hadith and other classical Islamic texts

Pondok Hut

Sakti Spiritual power; supernatural power; magic power

Salafism The strain of Muslim thought located in the interpretative tradition of the thirteenth-century Hanbalite jurist Ibn Tamiyyah. Ibn Tamiyyah advocated literal, rather than metaphorical or contextual, readings of the Qur'an and Hadith, uncompromising monotheism and strict enforcement of criminal provisions of *shari'ah*

Sapta Darma A Javanese mystical group

Santri A pious Muslim student who studies or lives in a *pesantren*

Shalawat Poems to praise God and the Prophet Muhammad

Shari'ah God's given law

Sheikh A title for an older Muslim male leader

Shirk The association of other beings or power with God

Silsilah A spiritual chain of transmission that links Sufi initiates to the Prophet Muhammad; spiritual genealogies linking *tarekat* to the Prophet Muhammad

Subud (An abbreviation of *Susila Budhi Dharma*) A Javanese mystical group with branches around the world

Sunnah Social and religious practice of the Prophet Muhammad, his family and companions

Syafi'i mazhab The Syafi'i school of law (followed by the majority of Muslims in Indonesia and Southeast Asia)

Tahlil A line from the Qur'an ('There is No God but God')

Tahlilan A ritual practice where the chanting of *tahlil* is performed

Tarekat (Ar. ***Tariqa***) Sufi order

Tauhid The Unity of God

Teungku (Aceh.) Religious scholar/teacher

Teungku inong (Aceh.) Female religious scholar/teacher

Tuan guru A pan-Malay title used in Lombok to refer to a male Muslim leader, scholar or preacher (otherwise known as *kyai*)

Ulama Muslim scholar(s)

Ummah Muslim community

Ummi (Ar.) Mother

Wahhabism The variant of Salafism founded by Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahab (1703–92). Its central doctrinal positions include the absolute sovereignty of God, the definition of any belief or practice affirming the possibility of intercession with God as idolatry, and the denunciation of Muslims who reject these messages as unbelievers

Wahyu Divine revelation

Wali Saint

Wirid Recitation of selected Qur'anic/Arabic texts; practice of reciting verses from the Qur'an in hopes that God will grant a request

Index

Abu Bakar Ba'asyir 135, 137, 142
Abu-Lughod, Lila 1
Abuse:
  of children 61–2, 157–8, 169–72;
  of power (by *kyai*) 130, ch. 8;
  of women 3, 4, 61
Aceh Women's Congress 68
Adat (customary law) 164;
  in Lombok 35, 36–8
Afghanistan 16;
  and Taliban 138
Agency:
  docile 26, ch. 3;
  economic 3;
  European notions 3;
  female 10, 93, 112–3;
  feminine 147;
  human and Muslim life 163;
  Islamist 136;
  Muslim 4, 18–9, 26, 31, 44;
  Muslim feminist 39;
  religious 11;
  submissive 66;
  substantial (active) 66
Al-Adawiyah, Rabia 1, 13, 85, 108
Al-Arabi, Ibn 13, 85, 109
Al-Ghazali 13, 104
Al-Hallaj 13
Al-Qaeda 27, 141
All West Aceh Ulama Forum 62
Arab-centrism 2–3
Arabic grammar 6–7, 176
Asceticism 91, 93, 108;
  Ascetic 31, 104, 109, 165
Authority:
  female (women's) 18–9, ch.1,2,3,4,5;
  and fundamentalism 138;
  in MMI ch. 7;
  Muslim male 10–12, 29, 119–20, 126, 130;
  in *pesantren* 11–12, 119–20, 122, 125;
  spiritual ch. 4–5;
  in *tarekat* 12, 93–8, ch.5

Badran, Margot 14
Barakah 11, 104
Barlas, Asma 128
Bourdieu, Pierre 157
Bride-wealth 37

CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women) 68–9
Child marriage 38, ch. 8
Colonialism:
  in Aceh 50–1
  British 2
  Dutch 2, 50–1, 88, 140, 164; in Western discourses 2
  Oriental 2
  post- 1, 18, 162; in discourse 2
  religious 2
  Saudi Arabian, Wahhabi 2
  Western 2
  and women's movements 14
Conflict:
  in Aceh 60, ch. 3;
  in Lombok ch. 1, 95–6
Consultative Council of the Ulama of Aceh 60
Curriculum:
  dayah 51, 52–3, 60, 72;
  MMI 135;
  tarekat Hizib Nahdlatul Wathan 30;
  pesantren 6, 8–9, 35, 38, 40, 121, 122, 128, 176

Darul Islam 67, 140
Dayah (*pesantren*) 4, 11, ch. 2–3;
history of 49–51
Democracy:
and fundamentalism (MMI) 135, 140, 150–1;
strategizing with 27;
in Lombok 28, 32;
in *pesantren* 16, 120, 132
Dhofier, Zamakhysari 3, 11, 29
Divine feminine 13, 87
Divorce:
before and during colonial era 168;
in Lombok 37–8, 43;
in MMI 144, 147;
in Nahdlatul Wathan 35
Domestic violence 18, 43, 61, 67, 68, 69, 72, 128, 130, 169
Domesticity, of women 7, 10, 72, 85, 127–9, 131, 136, 140, 143, 145–7, 150
Dowry murder 3

Eden, Lia 90, 93
Egypt:
Cairo 6;
Egyptians 4;
Ikhwanul Muslimin (Muslim Brotherhood) 29;
reform movements 5;
and women 66, 78
Eliade, Mircea 162
Engineer, Asghar Ali 15, 126, 128, 130
Enlightenment: reaction to by fundamentalists 138

Fahima Institute 16
FPI (Front Pembela Islam-Islamic Defender's Front) 93
Female genital mutilation 3
Feminism:
and activism 14, 120;
Arab 1–3;
feminisme 17, 126;
and fundamentalism 10, 14, 19, ch. 7;
and gender justice 16, 18, 119;
Islamic 2, 14, 33, ch. 6;
Islamist 10, 14–5;
and lesbianism 135–6;
and liberalism 135;
Muslim 1–2, 14–5, 18, 33;
in *pesantren* 5, 16, 17, ch.6;
production of 17;
religious 14;
secular 14;
South Asian 3, 119;
Western 10, 15, 19, 119, 126, 132, 139
Fiqh 7, 8, 10, 123, 128, 176
Ford Foundation 17
Foucault, Michel 180–3
Fundamentalism ch.7;
Fundamentalist 14, 15, 19;
Fundamentalist movements 27, 168

GAM- *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* 61, 67
Geertz, Clifford 3
Geertzian 12
Gender:
and ideology 15, 16, 32, 66, 85, 126–7;
and Islamic discourse 15, 37, 40, 43–4, 96, ch.6, 137;
in *dayah* ch.2–3;
equality 5, 14, 15, 16, 35, 60–1, 69–70, 73, 142–4;
justice 5, 15–6, 18, 32, 39, 43, 63, 119;
mainstreaming 16–7, 69–70;
segregation 52, 92, 97, 98, 136, 142, 167;
Subud discourse on 92;
and women's rights in MMI 146–7
Girls' education 9, 166;
in Lombok 37, 40, 44
Graves (importance of) 11, 12, 86, 94

Hakekat 84, 94, 97
Hassan, Riffat 15, 126
Hermeneutics 119, 124, 126, 128, 132, 162–3
Hidayatullah 15
Hizbut Tahrir 15, 27
Honour killings 3
Human rights 3, 16, 61, 63, 69, 166

Ibn al-Arabi: see al-Arabi, Ibn
Ibnu Malik 7
Identities (Islamic and Indonesian):
collective 3
personal 3
Indonesian independence 91
post-independence 67
prior to 8–9
Indonesian Islam 2–3;
Wahhabi influence on 158
Islamic organizations (in Indonesia): see Muhammadiyah; Nahdlatul Ulama; Nahdlatul Wathan
Islamism (as fundamentalism) 15, ch.7

Islamist groups: see Islamism; see FPI; see MMI; see PKS
Islamist/s 10, 14–5, 42, 72, 83, 87, 99, 119, 158–61, 163, 166, 168, 170, 171

Jam'iyah Ahli al-Thariqah al-Mu'tabaroh an-Nahdliyah (JATMAN) 13, 100
Javanese:
language 3, 6, 8, 98;
mystical movements: see Sapta Darma and Subud;
religious texts 3
traditional state 3
Jawi 52;
Kitab 8

Kalimantan:
pesantren in 4, 30;
Muslim scholar 107
Kartini, Raden Adjeng 125, 166
Kinship:
bilateral 3–4, 11, 26, 33, 86, 93;
patrilineal 37;
political 10, 31;
spiritual 9, 26, 32, 86, 91, 93
Kitab (*kuning*) 6, 7, 8, 55, 74, 119–20, 135
Kudus 5
Kyai Ahmad Dahlan: see Muhammadiyah
Kyai Hasyim Asy'ari 8
Kyai Hussein Muhammad 16

Leadership:
(Muslim) female 3, 5, 9–13, 18–9, ch.1, ch.2, 68, 70, 73–5, ch. 4, ch. 5, 125;
charismatic 3, 11, 74, 91, 139, 161
LINA- *Liga Inong Aceh* 76

Madrasah 4, 8, 28–9, 30, 121;
in Aceh 51–4, 59, 61, 63–4;
girls' in Lombok 9, 36–7, 40–2;
Madura 106, 107, 110
Mahmood, Saba 26, 38, 66
Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI) 15, 27 ch.7, 168
Majelis Taklim 30, 40;
female leadership of 72–5
Malaysia 4, 7, 16, 38, 66
Malinowski:
and methodology 18
Marcoes, Lies 16
Marginalization:
of Indonesian Islam 2;
of Muslim women 2;
of Southeast Asian women 2
Marriage ch. 8;
child: see child marriage;
contract in Islam 128;
endogamous 44, 71;
in Lombok 37, 43, 96;
in *pesantren* 7, 11–12, 71
Menstruation:
and MMI 144;
and Subud 109–10, 111;
and child marriage 165;
in *pesantren* 183
Mernissi, Fatima 15, 126
Modernity 27, 37, 121;
and Islamic fundamentalism 138–40, 143, 151–2;
and Islam 157–8, 163;
and tradition in literature 166;
and marriage 165–6
Muhammadiyah 5, 14–6, 17, 28, 32, 39;
and Amien Rias 160
and Aisyiyah 125;
and Kyai Ahmad Dahlan166;
University 123
Women's wings 43: Aisyiyah 17, 125; Naisyatul Aisyiyah 15, 17
Mulia, Siti Musdah 15, 16, 126, 137
Mysticism 6, 12, 58, 85, 87–8, 108, 176, 178;
and Subud: see Subud
and women 90–4

Nahdlatul Ulama 5, 8, 12, 13, 28, 43, 94, 120, 158, 171;
and feminism 14–17, 32, 39, 43, 125–6;
Women's wing: Muslimat Nahdlatul Ulama 16–17, 125
Nahdlatul Wathan ch. 1, 84, 95–97, 100;
Women's wing: *Muslimat* NW 30, 35, 39, 42–3
Naqshbandiyya: see Sufism
Nuryiah, Sinta 16
Nyai 9–12, 16;
important figures in *tarekat* 106–7, 110;
and leadership 97–98, ch.9
and power 70–1

Oral tradition:
in *pesantren* 6–7, 53
Orientalism 1;
Anglo-Dutch 3, 12, 83

Pakistan 16;
and women 66
Pancasila 136, 150–1
Patriarchy:
and abuse 4;
in *Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia* (MMI) 142, 151;
in *pesantren* 3, 5, 7, 10–11, 32, 45, 128, 130
Paedophile 158, 170
Perhimpunan Pengembangan Pesantren dan Masyarakat (Union for Pesantren and Community Development) 17
Persistri 125
Pesantren selves 3–5, 15, 18–19, 26–7, 32, 45, 185
Pesantren Dar al-Tauhid 16
Pesantren Lirboyo 6, 9
Pesantren Tebuireng 8
Philippines 4
Piety 5, 12, 26, 29, 38–9, 42, 45, 97, 99, 128, 130, 147, 159
PKS (Prosperous Justice Party) 15, 158, 168, 170–71
Politics, women in 28, 31, 60, 62, 67, 73, 76–77, 87, 149, 150
Polygamy 38, 40–1, 130, 137, ch.8
Pornography 142, 179, 184
Power:
achieved and derived 70–71;
spiritual 9, 12, 26, 28, 31–36, 84–87, 97, 161, 167

Rahima (Centre for Education and Information on Islam and the Rights of Women) 17
Rape 43, 62
Reformist (Islam) 5, 27–9, 32–3, 36, 38, 42, 58, 83
Reproductive health 43, 60, 127, 128, 129–30, 180;
rights 18, 130
Rifka An-Nisa 17, 43, 72
Ritual performance:
in *pesantren* 7
Rumi, Jalal al-Din 106, 109

Said, Edward 1
Salafi 15, 58, 89, 135, 161, 168
Salafism ch.1
Sapta Darma 84, 90–3, 94, 100
Saudi Arabia 38;
and fundamentalism 138
and male leadership 151;
and religious colonialism 2;
Saudi Arabians 4;
Saudi Arabian scholars 136,146
Schimmel, Annemarie 13, 109
Sexual harassment 43
Sexuality 1, 5, 19;
homosexuality 17, 135, 144;
regulation (or preservation and control) of, in *pesantren* 7, 9, 72, 97, 123, ch.9;
lesbianism 14, 135–6, 144;
and *shari'ah* 68, 113, 136;
and spiritual power 167;
in *tarekat* 109–10;
transvestite (in *pesantren*) 17;
under surveillance 38
Shari'ah:
in Aceh 67–9;
and Family Law 162, 164, 171;
and gender 32–3, 41, 97, 167;
and Islamists 158–9, 160;
and MMI 136, 140–1, 144, 147–50;
in *pesantren* 8, 19, 26, 123, 175, 185;
and polygamy 168;
and the state 88, 135;
and Sufism 94, 108, 110, 111, 113
Singapore 16
Social science 17
Southeast Asia 2;
and Islamic thought 5;
and Muslim discourse 13
Subud 12, 84, 90–3, 94, 103, 107–8, 111–14;
Ibu Rahayu 91–93, 108, 113;
Latihan kejiwaan 91, 108, 113; and pregnancy 111; and menstruation 111;
Leadership structure 92, 111
Sufi orders (*tarekat*):
Bektashiyya 106, 110;
Chistiyya 106;
Khalwatiyya 106;
Kubrawiyya 104;
Mawlawiyya 106, 110;
Muridiyya 110;
Naqshbandiyya 13, 58, 64, 73, 97, 107, 121;
Naqshbandiyya-Mazhariyya 106–7;
Qadiriyya wa Naqshbandiyya 13, 45, ch.5;
Sammaniyya 13;
Suhrawardiyya 106;

Sufi orders (*tarekat*) (*continued*)
Syattariyya 13;
Syadhiliyya 13, 104;
Tarekat Hizib Nahdlatul Wathan ch.1, 95–6;
Tijaniyya 13, 105, 110
Sufism 1, 3, 5, 12–13, 18, ch.1, 54, 58, 73, ch.4–5, 161;
Communal 30;
Communal ritual 111–12;
Rituals 75;
Spiritual orgasm 104;
Saints 8, 11, 12, 13, 16, 26, 28, 29, 88, 94, 95, 99–100
Suharto 25, 28, 32, 38, 63, 68, 71, 86, 88, 89, 125, 136, 168
Sukarnoputri, Megawati 10, 31, 88, 150, 161
Sultanah 50, 63
Sumatra 4, 54, 63, 177
Sumbawa 4, 30
Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University 137, 177, 181
Sunni:
Islam 5, 6, 7;
Sufism 13, 97
Syafi'i school of law 5, 10, 28–9, 32, 33, 34, 36, 42

Tabligi Jamaah 27
Tarekat: see Sufism
Teungku Fakinah 51
Teungku Cutpo Fatimah 51
Thailand 4, 6, 7, 8
Tsunami (in Aceh) 17, 61, 62;
and gender discourse ch.3

Tuan guru ch.1, 95–6, 97;
Tuan Guru Bajang ch.1;
Tuan Guru Kyai Hajji Zainuddin Abdul Madjid ch.1, 95

Ulama 6, 129
in Aceh ch.2–3
critique of gender ch.3
women leaders ch.2–3
United Nations 17, 61, 69, 126
Unity of Being 13
Unity of God 13
Unity of Vision 13

Van Bruinessen, Martin 5

Wadud, Amina 15, 126
Wahhabi 2–3, 15, 89, 136, 160–61;
Wahhabism 138
Wahid, Abdurraham 4, 16, 88, 120, 130, 176
Wahid, Yenni 16
Wetu Telu 28, 45
Wirid:
in *pesantren* 122–23, 177;
and ritual 160–1;
and Sufi women 40

Yogyakarta 5–6, 9, 43, 122, 126, 137, 140, 166;
pesantren in ch.9;
Sultan of 165

Ziyarah (pilgrimage) 93;
kubur 12

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SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES / RELIGION / GENDER

Cover image: Ummi Siti Raehanun, the controversial leader of Lombok's Nahdlatul Wathan Islamic organization, is revered by a loyal follower in her *pesantren*. Photo by Saipul Hamdi, 2008.

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